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OLD FOGY

HIS MUSICAL OPINIONS AND GROTESQUES

With an Introduction
and Edited

BY

JAMES HUNEKER

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These Musical Opinions and Grotesques
are dedicated to

RAFAEL JOSEFFY

Whose beautiful art was ever a source of
delight to his fellow-countryman,
OLD FOGY

INTRODUCTION

MY friend the publisher has asked me to tell you what I know about Old Fogy, whose letters aroused much curiosity and comment when they appeared from time to time in the columns of THE ETUDE. I confess I do this rather unwillingly. When I attempted to assemble my memories of the eccentric and irascible musician I found that, despite his enormous volubility and surface-frankness, the old gentleman seldom allowed us more than a peep at his personality. His was the expansive temperament, or, to employ a modern phrase, the dynamic temperament. Antiquated as were his modes of thought, he would bewilder you with an excursion into latter-day literature, and like a rift of light in a fogbank you then caught a gleam of an entirely different mentality. One day I found him reading a book by the French writer Huysmans, dealing with new art. And he confessed to me that he admired Hauptmann's *Hannele*, though he despised the same dramatist's *Weavers*. The truth is that no human being is made all of a piece; we are, mentally at least, more of a mosaic than we believe.

Let me hasten to negative the report that I was ever a pupil of Old Fogy. To be sure, I did play for him once a paraphrase of *The Maiden's Prayer* (in double tenths by Dogowsky), but he laughed so heartily that I feared apoplexy, and soon stopped. The man really existed. There are a score of persons alive in Philadelphia today who still remember him and could call him by his name—formerly an impossible Hungarian one, with two or three syllables lopped off at the end, and for family reasons not divulged here. He assented that he was a fellow-pupil of Liszt's under the beneficent, iron rule of Carl Czerny. But he never looked his age. Seemingly seventy, a very vital threescore-and-ten, by the way, he was as light on his feet as were his fingers on the keyboard. A linguist, speaking without a trace of foreign accent three or four tongues, he was equally fluent in all. Once launched in an argument there was no stopping him. Nor was he an agreeable opponent. Torrents and cataracts of words poured from his mouth.

He pretended to hate modern music, but, as you will note after reading his opinions, collected for the first time in this volume, he very often contradicts himself. He abused Bach, then used the *Well-tempered Clavichord* as a

weapon of offense wherewith to pound Liszt and the *Lisztianer*. He attacked Wagner and Wagnerism with inappeasable fury, but I suspect that he was secretly much impressed by several of the music-dramas, particularly *Die Meistersinger*. As for his severe criticism of metropolitan orchestras, that may be set down to provincial narrowness; certainly, he was unfair to the Philharmonic Society. Therefore, I don't set much store on his harsh judgments of Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss, and other composers. He insisted on the superiority of Chopin's piano music above all others; nevertheless he devoted more time to Hummel, and I can personally vouch that he adored the slightly banal compositions of the worthy Dussek. It is quite true that he named his little villa on the Wissahickon Creek after Dussek.

Nourished by the romantic writers of the past century, especially by Hoffmann and his fantastic *Kreisleriana*, their influence upon the writing of Old Fogy is not difficult to detect. He loved the fantastic, the bizarre, the grotesque —for the latter quality he endured the literary work of Berlioz, hating all the while his music. And this is a curious crack in his mental make-up; his admiration for the exotic in literature and his abhorrence of the same quality when it

manifested itself in tone. I never entirely understood Old Fogy. In one evening he would flash out a dozen contradictory opinions. Of his sincerity I have no doubt; but he was one of those natures that are sincere only for the moment. He might fume at Schumann and call him a vanishing star, and then he would go to the piano and play the first few pages of the glorious A minor concerto most admirably. How did he play? Not in an extraordinary manner. Solidly schooled, his technical attainments were only of a respectable order; but when excited he revealed traces of a higher virtuosity than was to have been expected. I recall his series of twelve historical recitals, in which he practically explored all pianoforte literature from Alkan to Zarembski. These recitals were privately given in the presence of a few friends. Old Fogy played all the concertos, sonatas, studies and minor pieces worth while. His touch was dry, his style neat. A pianist made, not born, I should say.

He was really at his best when he unchained his fancy. His musical grotesques are a survival from the Hoffmann period, but written so as to throw an ironic light upon the artistic tendencies of our time. Need I add that he did not care for the vaporous tonal experiments of

Debussy and the new school! But then he was an indifferent critic and an enthusiastic advocate.

He never played in public to my knowledge, nor within the memory of any man alive today. He was always vivacious, pugnacious, hardly sagacious. He would sputter with rage if you suggested that he was aged enough to be called "venerable." How old was he—for he died suddenly last September at his home somewhere in southeastern Europe? I don't know. His grandson, a man already well advanced in years, wouldn't or couldn't give me any precise information, but, considering that he was an intimate of the early Liszt, I should say that Old Fogy was born in the years 1809 or 1810. No one will ever dispute these dates, as was the case with Chopin, for Old Fogy will be soon forgotten. It is due to the pious friendship of the publisher that these opinions are bound between covers. They are the record of a stubborn, prejudiced, well-trained musician and well-read man, one who was not devoid of irony. Indeed, I believe he wrote much with his tongue in his cheek. But he was a stimulating companion, boasted a perverse funny-bone and a profound sense of the importance of being Old Fogy. And this is all I know about the man.

JAMES HUNEKER.

Old Fogy

I

OLD FOGY IS PESSIMISTIC

ONCE every twelve months, to be precise, as the year dies and the sap sinks in my old veins, my physical and psychologic—isn't that the new-fangled way of putting it?—barometer sinks; in sympathy with Nature I suppose. My corns ache, I get gouty, and my prejudices swell like varicose veins.

Errors! Yes, errors! The word is not polite, nor am I in a mood of politeness. I consider such phrases as the "progress of art," the "improvement of art" and "higher average of art" distinctly and harmfully misleading. I haven't the leisure just now to demonstrate these mistaken propositions, but I shall write a few sentences.

How can art improve? Is art a something, an organism capable of "growing up" into maturity? If it is, by the same token it can grow old, can become a doddering, senile thing, and finally die and be buried with all the honors due its long, useful life. It was Henrik Ibsen who said that

the value of a truth lasted about fifteen years; then it rotted into error. Now, isn't all this talk of artistic improvement as fallacious as the vicious reasoning of the Norwegian dramatist? Otherwise Bach would be dead; Beethoven, middle-aged; Mozart, senile. What, instead, is the health of these three composers? Have you a gayer, blither, more youthful scapegrace writing today than Mozart? Is there a man among the moderns more virile, more passionately earnest or noble than Beethoven? Bach, of the three, seems the oldest; yet his *C-sharp major Prelude* belies his years. On the contrary, the *Well-tempered Clavichord* grows younger with time. It is the Book of Eternal Wisdom. It is the Fountain of Eternal Youth.

As a matter of cold, hard fact, it is your modern who is ancient; the ancients were younger. Consider the Greeks and their naïve joy in creation! The twentieth-century man brings forth his works of art in sorrow. His music shows it. It is sad, complicated, hysterical and morbid. I shan't allude to Chopin, who was neurotic—another empty medical phrase!—or to Schumann, who carried within him the seeds of madness; or to Wagner, who was a decadent; sufficient for the purposes of my argument to mention the names of Liszt, Berlioz, Tchai-

kovsky and Richard Strauss. Some day when the weather is wretched, when icicles hang by the wall, and "ways be foul" and "foul is fair and fair is foul"—pardon this jumble of Shakespeare!—I shall tell you what I think of the blond madman who sets to music crazy philosophies, bloody legends, sublime tommy-rot, and his friend's poems and pictures. At this writing I have neither humor nor space.

As I understand the rank and jargon of modern criticism, Berlioz is called the father of modern instrumentation. That is, he says nothing in his music, but says it magnificently. His orchestration covers a multitude of weaknesses with a flamboyant cloak of charity. [Now, here I go again; I could have just as easily written "flaming"; but I, too, must copy Berlioz!] He pins haughty, poetic, high-sounding labels to his works, and, like Charles Lamb, we sit open-mouthed at concerts trying to fill in his big sonorous frame with a picture. Your picture is not mine, and I'll swear that the young man who sits next to me with a silly chin, goggle-eyes and cocoanut-shaped head sees as in a fluttering mirror the idealized image of a strong-chinned, ox-eyed, classic-browed youth, a mixture of Napoleon at Saint Helena and Lord Byron invoking the Alps to fall upon him. Now, I loathe

such music. It makes its chief appeal to the egotism of mankind, all the time slily insinuating that it addresses the imagination. What fudge! Yes, the imagination of your own splendid *ego* in a white vest [we called them waistcoats when I was young], driving an automobile down Walnut Street, at noon on a bright Spring Sunday. How lofty!

Let us pass to the Hungarian piano-virtuoso who posed as a composer. That he lent money and thematic ideas to his precious son-in-law, Richard Wagner, I do not doubt. But, then, beggars must not be choosers, and Liszt gave to Wagner mighty poor stuff, musically speaking. And I fancy that Wagner liked far better the solid cash than the notes of hand! Liszt, I think, would have had nothing to say if Berlioz had not preceded him. The idea struck him, for he was a master of musical snippets, that Berlioz was too long-winded, that his symphonies were neither fish nor form. What ho! cried Master Franz, I'll give them a dose homeopathic. He did, and named his prescription a *Symphonic Poem* or, rather, *Poéme Symphonique*, which is not quite the same thing. Nothing tickles the vanity of the groundlings like this sort of verbal fireworks. "It leaves so much to the imagination," says the stout man with the twenty-two

collar and the number six hat. It does. And the kind of imagination—Oh, Lord! Liszt, nothing daunted because he couldn't shake out an honest throw of a tune from his technical dice-box, built his music on so-called themes, claiming that in this matter he derived from Bach. Not so. Bach's themes were subjects for fugal treatment; Liszt's, for symphonic. The parallel is not fair. Besides, Daddy Liszt had no melodic invention. Bach had. Witness his chorals, his masses, his oratorios! But the Berlioz ball had to be kept a-rolling; the formula was too easy; so Liszt named his poems, named his notes, put dog-collars on his harmonies—and yet no one whistled after them. Is it any wonder?

Tchaikovsky studied Liszt with one eye; the other he kept on Bellini and the Italians. What might have happened if he had been one-eyed I cannot pretend to say. In love with lush, sensuous melody, attracted by the gorgeous pyrotechnical effects in Berlioz and Liszt and the pomposities of Meyerbeer, this Russian, who began study too late and being too lazy to work hard, manufactured a number of symphonic poems. To them he gave strained, fantastic names—names meaningless and pretty—and, as he was short-winded contrapuntally, he wrote

his so-called instrumental poems shorter than Liszt's. He had no symphonic talent, he substituted Italian tunes for dignified themes, and when the development section came he plastered on more sentimental melodies. His sentiment is hectic, is unhealthy, is morbid. Tchaikovsky either raves or whines like the people in a Russian novel. I think the fellow was a bit touched in the upper story; that is, I did until I heard the compositions of R. Strauss, of Munich. What misfit music for such a joyous name, a name evocative of all that is gay, refined, witty, sparkling, and spontaneous in music! After Mozart give me Strauss—Johann, however, not Richard!

No longer the wheezings, gaspings, and short-breathed phrases of Liszt; no longer the evil sensuality, loose construction, formlessness, and drunken peasant dances of Tchaikovsky; but a blending of Wagner, Brahms, Liszt—and the classics. Oh, Strauss, Richard, knows his business! He is a skilled writer. He has his chamber-music moments, his lyric outbursts; his early songs are sometimes singable; it is his perverse, vile orgies of orchestral music that I speak of. No sane man ever erected such a mad architectural scheme. He should be penned behind the bars of his own mad music. He has

no melody. He loves ugly noises. He writes to distracting lengths; and, worst of all, his harmonies are hideous. But he doesn't forget to call his monstrosities fanciful names. If it isn't *Don Juan*, it is *Don Quixote*—have you heard the latter? [O shades of Mozart!] This giving his so-called compositions literary titles is the plaster for our broken heads—and eardrums. So much for your three favorite latter-day composers.

Now for my *Coda!* If the art of today has made no progress in fugue, song, sonata, symphony, quartet, oratorio, opera [who has improved on Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert? Name! name! I say], what is the use of talking about "the average of today being higher"? How higher? You mean more people go to concerts, more people enjoy music than fifty or a hundred years ago! Do they? I doubt it. Of what use huge places of worship when the true gods of art are no longer worshiped? Numbers prove nothing; the majority is not always in the right. I contend that there has been no great music made since the death of Beethoven; that the multiplication of orchestras, singing societies, and concerts are no true sign that genuine culture is being achieved. The tradition of the classics is lost; we care not for

the true masters. Modern music making is a fashionable fad. People go because they think they should. There was more real musical feeling, uplifting and sincere, in the Old St. Thomaskirche in Leipsic where Bach played than in all your modern symphony and oratorio machine-made concerts. I'll return to the charge again!

DUSSEK VILLA-ON-WISSAHICKON,
NEAR MANAYUNK, PA.

II

OLD FOGY GOES ABROAD

BEFORE I went to Bayreuth I had always believed that some magic spell rested upon the Franconian hills like a musical benison; some mystery of art, atmosphere, and individuality evoked by the place, the tradition, the people. How sadly I was disappointed I propose to tell you, prefacing all by remarking that in Philadelphia, dear old, dusty Philadelphia, situated near the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill, I have listened to better representations of the *Ring* and *Die Meistersinger*.

It is just thirty years since I last visited Germany. Before the Franco-Prussian War there was an air of sweetness, homeliness, an old-fashioned peace in the land. The swaggering conqueror, the arrogant Berliner type of all that is unpleasant, *modern* and insolent now overruns Germany. The ingenuousness, the *naïve* quality that made dear the art of the Fatherland, has disappeared. In its place is smartness, flippancy, cynicism, unbelief, and the critical faculty developed to the pathological point. I thought of Schubert, and sighed in the presence of all this wit and savage humor. Bay-

reuth is full of *doctrinaires*. They eagerly dispute Wagner's meanings, and my venerable notions of the *Ring* were not only sneered at, but, to be quite frank with you, dissipated into thin, metaphysical smoke.

In 1869 I fancied Reinecke a decent composer, Schopenhauer remarkable, if somewhat bitter in his philosophic attitude towards life. Reinecke is now a mere ghost of a ghost, a respectable memory of Leipsic, whilst Schopenhauer has been brutally elbowed out of his niche by his former follower, Nietzsche. In every *café*, in every summer-garden I sought I found groups of young men talking heatedly about Nietzsche, and the Over-Man, the *Uebermensch*, to be quite German. I had, in the innocence of my Wissahickon soul, supposed Schopenhauer Wagner's favorite philosopher. Mustering up my best German, somewhat worn from disuse, I gave speech to my views, after the manner of a garrulous old man who hates to be put on the shelf before he is quite disabled.

Ach! but I caught it, *ach!* but I was pulverized and left speechless by these devotees of the Hammer-philosopher, Nietzsche. I was told that Wagner was a fairly good musician, although no inventor of themes. He had evolved no new melodies, but his knowledge of harmony, above

all, his *constructive* power, were his best recommendations. As for his abilities as a dramatic poet, absurd! His metaphysics were green with age, his theories as to the syntheses of the arts silly and impracticable, while his Schopenhauerism, pessimism, and the rest sheer dead weights that were slowly but none the less surely strangling his music. When I asked how this change of heart came about, how all that I had supposed that went to the making of the Bayreuth theories was exploded moonshine, I was curtly reminded of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche again, always this confounded Nietzsche, who, mad as a hatter at Naumburg, yet contrives to hypnotize the younger generation with his crazy doctrines of force, of the great Blond Barbarian, of the Will to Destroy—infinitely more vicious than the Will to Live—and the inherent immorality of Wagner's music. I came to Bayreuth to criticize; I go away praying, praying for the mental salvation of his new expounders, praying that this poisonous nonsense will not reach us in America. But it will.

The charm of this little city is the high price charged for everything. A stranger is "spotted" at once and he is the prey of the townspeople. Beer, carriages, food, pictures, music, busts, books, rooms, nothing is cheap. I've been all

over, saw Wagner's tomb, looked at the outside of *Wahnfried* and the inside of the theater. I have seen Siegfried Wagner—who can't conduct one-quarter as well as our own Walter Damrosch—walking up and down the streets, a tin demi-god, a reduced octavo edition of his father bound in cheap calf. Worse still, I have heard the young man try to conduct, try to hold that mighty Bayreuth orchestra in leash, and with painful results. Not one firm, clanging chord could he extort; all were more or less arpeggioed, and as for climax—there was none.

I have sat in Sammett's garden, which was once Angermann's, famous for its company, kings, composers, poets, wits, and critics, all mingling there in discordant harmony. Now it is overrun by Cook's tourists in bicycle costumes, irreverent, chattering, idle, and foolish. Even Wagner has grown gray and the *Ring* sounded antique to me, so strong were the disturbing influences of my environment.

The bad singing by ancient Teutons—for the most part—was to blame for this. Certainly when Walhall had succumbed to the flames and the primordial Ash-Tree sunk in the lapping waters of the treacherous Rhine, I felt that the end of the universe was at hand and it was with a sob I saw outside in the soft, summer-sky,

riding gallantly in the blue, the full moon. It was the only young thing in the world at that moment, this burnt-out servant planet of ours, and I gazed at it long and fondly, for it recalled the romance of my student years, my love of Schumann's poetic music and other illusions of a vanished past. In a word, I had again surrendered to the sentimental spell of Germany, Germany by night, and with my heart full I descended from the terrace, walked slowly down the arbored avenue to Sammett's garden and there sat, mused and—smoked my Yankee pipe. I realize that I am, indeed, an old man ready for that shelf the youngsters provide for the superannuated and those who disagree with them.

I had all but forgotten the performances. They were, as I declared at the outset, far from perfect, far from satisfactory. The *Ring* was depressing. Rosa Sucher, who visited us some years ago, was a flabby *Sieglinde*. The *Siegmund*, Herr Burgstalles, a lanky, awkward young fellow from over the hills somewhere. He was sad. Ernst Kraus, an old acquaintance, was a familiar *Siegfried*. Demeter Popovici you remember with Damrosch, also Hans Greuer. Van Rooy's *Wotan* was supreme. It was the one pleasant memory of Bayreuth, that and the moon. Gadski was not an ideal

Eva in *Meistersinger*, while Demuth was an excellent *Hans Sachs*. The *Brünnhilde* was Ellen Gulbranson, a Scandinavian. She was an heroic icicle that Wagner himself could not melt. Schumann-Heink, as *Magdalene* in *Meistersinger*, was simply grotesque. Van Rooy's *Walther* I missed. Hans Richter conducted my favorite of the Wagner music dramas, the touching and pathetic Nuremberg romance, and, to my surprise, went to sleep over the *tempi*. He has the technique of the conductor, but the elbow-grease was missing. He too is old, but better one aged Richter than a caveful of spry Siegfried Wagners!

I shan't bother you any more as to details. Bayreuth is full of ghosts—the very trees on the terrace whisper the names of Liszt and Wagner—but Madame Cosima is running the establishment for all there is in it financially—excuse my slang—and so Bayreuth is deteriorating. I saw her, Liszt's daughter, von Bülow, and Wagner's wife—or rather widow—and her gaunt frame, strong if angular features, gave me the sight of another ghost from the past. Ghosts, ghosts, the world is getting old and weary, and astride of it just now is the pessimist Nietzsche, who, disguised as a herculean boy, is deceiving his worshippers with the belief that he is young and

a preacher of the joyful doctrines of youth. Be not deceived, he is but another veiled prophet. His mask is that of a grinning skeleton, his words are bitter with death and deceit.

I stopped over at Nuremberg and at a chamber concert heard Schubert's quintet for piano and strings, *Die Forelle*—and although I am no trout fisher, the sweet, boyish loquacity, the pure music made my heart glad and I wept.

III

THE WAGNER CRAZE

THE new century is at hand—I am not one of those chronologically stupid persons who believes that we are now in it—and tottering as I am on its brink, the brink of my grave, and of all born during 1900, it might prove interesting as well as profitable for me to review my musical past. I hear the young folks cry aloud: "Here comes that garrulous old chap again with his car-load of musty reminiscences! Even if Old Fogy did study with Hummel, is that any reason why we should be bored by the fact? How can a skeleton in the closet tell *us* anything valuable about contemporary music?"

To this youthful wail—and it is a real one—I can raise no real objection. I am an Old Fogy; but I know it. That marks the difference between other old fogies and myself. Some English wit recently remarked that the sadness of old age in a woman is because her face changes; but the sad part of old age in a man is that his mind does not change. Well, I admit we septuagenarians are set in our ways. We have lived our lives, felt, suffered, rejoiced, and perhaps grown a little tolerant, a little apathetic. The

young people call it cynical; yet it is not cynicism —only a large charity for the failings, the shortcomings of others. So what I am about to say in this letter must not be set down as either garrulity or senile cynicism. It is the result of a half-century of close observation, and, young folks, let me tell you that in fifty years much music has gone through the orifices of my ears; many artistic reputations made and lost!

I repeat, I have witnessed the rise and fall of so many musical dynasties; have seen men like Wagner emerge from northern mists and die in the full glory of a reverberating sunset. And I have also remarked that this same Richard the Actor touched his apogee fifteen years ago and more. Already signs are not wanting which show that Wagner and Wagnerism is on the decline. As Swinburne said of Walt Whitman: "A reformer—but not founder." This holds good of Wagner, who closed a period and did not begin a new one. In a word, Wagner was a theater musician, one cursed by a craze for public applause—and shekels—and knowing his public, gave them more operatic music than any Italian who ever wrote for barrel-organ fame. Wagner became popular, the rage; and today his music, grown stale in Germany, is being fervently imitated, nay, burlesqued, by the neo-Italian

school. Come, is it not a comical situation, this swapping of themes among the nations, this picking and stealing of styles? And let me tell you that of all the Robber Barons of music, Wagner was the worst. He laid hands on every score, classical or modern, that he got hold of.

But I anticipate; I put the *coda* before the dog. When *Rienzi* appeared none of us were deceived. We recognized our Meyerbeer disfigured by clumsy, heavy German treatment. Wagner had been to the opera in Paris and knew his Meyerbeer; but even Wagner could not distance Meyerbeer. He had not the melodic invention, the orchestral tact, or the dramatic sense—at that time. Being a born mimicker of other men, a very German in industry, and a great egotist, he began casting about for other models. He soon found one, the greatest of all for his purpose. It was Weber—that same Weber for whose obsequies Wagner wrote some funeral music, not forgetting to use a theme from the *Euryanthe* overture. Weber was to Wagner a veritable Golconda. From this diamond mine he dug out tons of precious stones; and some of them he used for *The Flying Dutchman*. We all saw then what a parody on Weber was this pretentious opera, with its patches of purple, its stale choruses, its tiresome recitatives. The

latter Wagner fondly imagined were but prolonged melodies. Already in his active, but musically-barren brain, theories were seething. "How to compose operas without music" might be the title of all his prose theoretical works. Not having a tail, this fox, therefore, solemnly argued that tails were useless appanages. You remember your Æsop! Instead of melodic inspiration, themes were to be used. Instead of broad, flowing, but intelligible themes, a mongrel breed of recitative and *parlando* was to take their place.

It was all very clever, I grant you, for it threw dust in the public eye—and the public likes to have its eyes dusted, especially if the dust is fine and flattering. Wagner proceeded to make it so by labeling his themes, leading motives. Each one meant something. And the Germans, the vainest race in Europe, rose like catfish to the bait. Wagner, in effect, told them that his music required brains—Aha! said the German, he means *me;* that his music was not cheap, pretty, and sensual, but spiritual, lofty, ideal—Oho! cried the German, he means *me* again. I am ideal. And so the game went merrily on. Being the greatest egotist that ever lived, Wagner knew that this music could not make its way without a violent polemic, without extraneous

advertising aids. So he made a big row; became socialist, agitator, exile. He dragged into his music and the discussion of it, art, politics, literature, philosophy, and religion. It is a well-known fact that this humbugging comedian had written the *Ring of the Nibelungs* before he absorbed the Schopenhauerian doctrines, and then altered the entire scheme so as to imbue—forsooth!—his music with pessimism.

Nor was there ever such folly, such arrant "faking" as this! What has philosophy, religion, politics to do with operatic music? It cannot express any one of them. Wagner, clever charlatan, knew this, so he worked the leading-motive game for all it was worth. Realizing the indefinite nature of music, he gave to his themes—most of them borrowed without quotation marks—such titles as Love-Death; Presentiment of Death; Cooking motive—in *Siegfried;* Compact theme, etc., etc. The list is a lengthy one. And when taxed with originating all this futile child's-play he denied that he had named his themes. Pray, then, who did? Did von Wolzogen? Did Tappert? They worked directly under his direction, put forth the musical lures and decoys and the ignorant public was easily bamboozled. Simply mention the esoteric, the mysterious omens, signs, dark designs, and magical symbols,

and you catch a certain class of weak-minded persons.

Wagner knew this; knew that the theater, with its lights, its scenery, its costumes, orchestra, and vocalizing, was the place to hoodwink the "cultured" classes. Having a pretty taste in digging up old fables and love-stories, he saturated them with mysticism and far-fetched musical motives. If *The Flying Dutchman* is absurd in its story—what possible interest can we take in the *Salvation* of an idiotic mariner, who doesn't know how to navigate his ship, much less a wife? —what is to be said of *Lohengrin?* This cheap Italian music, sugar-coated in its sensuousness, the awful borrowings from Weber, Marschner, Beethoven, and Gluck—and the story! It is called "mystic." Why? Because it is *not*, I suppose. What puerile trumpery is that refusal of a man to reveal his name! And *Elsa!* Why not Lot's wife, whose curiosity turned her into a salt trust!

You may notice just here what the Wagnerians are pleased to call the Master's "second" manner. Rubbish! It is a return to the Italians. It is a graft of glistening Italian sensuality upon Wagner's strenuous study of Beethoven's and Weber's orchestras. *Tannhäuser* is more manly in its fiber. But the style, the mixture of styles;

the lack of organic unity, the blustering orchestration, and the execrable voice-killing vocal writing! The *Ring* is an amorphous impossibility. That is now critically admitted. It ruins voices, managers, the public purse, and our patience. Its stories are indecent, blasphemous, silly, absurd, trivial, tiresome. To talk of the *Ring* and Beethoven's symphonies is to put wind and wisdom in the same category. Wagner vulgarized Beethoven's symphonic methods—noticeably his powers of development. Think of utilizing that magnificent and formidable engine, the Beethoven symphonic method, to accompany a tinsel tale of garbled Norse mythology with all sorts of modern affectations and morbidities introduced! It is maddening to any student of pure, noble style. Wagner's Byzantine style has helped corrupt much modern art.

Tristan und Isolde is the falsifying of all the pet Wagner doctrines—Ah! that odious, heavy, pompous prose of Wagner. In this erotic comedy there is no action, nothing happens except at long intervals; while the orchestra never stops its garrulous symphonizing. And if you prate to me of the wonderful Wagner orchestration and its eloquence, I shall quarrel with you. Why wonderful? It never stops, but does it ever say

anything? Every theme is butchered to death. There is endless repetition in different keys, with different instrumental *nuances*, yet of true, intellectual and emotional mood-development there is no trace; short-breathed, chippy, choppy phrasing, and never ten bars of a big, straightforward melody. All this proves that Wagner had not the power of sustained thoughts like Mozart or Beethoven. And his orchestration, with its daubing, its overladen, hysterical color! What a humbug is this sensualist, who masks his pruriency back of poetic and philosophical symbols. But it is always easy to recognize the cloven foot. The headache and jaded nerves we have after a night with Wagner tell the story.

I admit that *Die Meistersinger* is healthy. Only it is not art. And don't forget, my children, that Wagner's prettiest lyrics came from Schubert and Schumann. They have all been traced and located. I need not insult your intelligence by suggesting that the *Wotan* motive is to be found in Schubert's *Wanderer*. If you wish for the *Waldweben* just go to Spohr's *Consecration of Tones* symphony, first movement. And Weber also furnishes a pleasing list, notably the *Sword* motive from the *Ring,* which may be heard in *Ocean, Thou Mighty Monster. Parsifal* I refuse to discuss. It is an outrage against religion,

morals, and music. However, it is not alone this plagiarizing that makes Wagner so unendurable to me. It is his continual masking as the greatest composer of his century, when he was only a clever impostor, a theater-man, a wearer of borrowed plumage. His influence on music has been deplorably evil. He has melodramatized the art, introduced in it a species of false, theatrical, *personal* feeling, quite foreign to its nature. The symphony, not the stage, is the objective of musical art. Wagner—neither composer nor tragedian, but a cunning blend of both—diverted the art to his own uses. A great force? Yes, a great force was his, but a dangerous one. He never reached the heights, but was always posturing behind the foot-lights. And he has left no school, no descendants. Like all hybrids, he is cursed with sterility. The twentieth century will find Wagner out. *Nunc Dimittis!*

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IV

IN MOZARTLAND WITH OLD FOGY

THE greatest musician the world has yet known—Mozart. The greatest? Yes, the greatest; greater than Bach, because less studied, less artificial, professional, and *doctrinaire;* greater than Beethoven, because Mozart's was a blither, a more serene spirit, and a spirit whose eyes had been anointed by beauty. Beethoven is not beautiful. He is dramatic, powerful, a maker of storms, a subduer of tempests; but his speech is the speech of a self-centered egotist. He is the father of all the modern melomaniacs, who, looking into their own souls, write what they see therein—misery, corruption, slighting selfishness, and ugliness. Beethoven, I say, was too near Mozart not to absorb some of his sanity, his sense of proportion, his glad outlook upon life; but the dissatisfied peasant in the composer of the *Eroica*, always in revolt, would not allow him tranquillity. Now is the fashion for soul hurricanes, these confessions of impotent wrath in music.

Beethoven began this fashion; Mozart did not. Beethoven had himself eternally in view when he wrote. His music mirrors his wretched, though

profound, soul; it also mirrors many weaknesses. I always remember Beethoven and Goethe standing side by side as some royal nobody—I forget the name—went by. Goethe doffed his bonnet and stood uncovered, head becomingly bowed. Beethoven folded his arms and made no obeisance. This anecdote, not an apochryphal one, is always hailed as an evidence of Beethoven's sturdiness of character, his rank republicanism, while Goethe is slightly sniffed at for his snobbishness. Yet he was only behaving as a gentleman should. If Mozart had been in Beethoven's place, how courtly would have been the bow of the little, graceful Austrian composer! No, Beethoven was a boor, a clumsy one, and this quality abides in his music—for music is always the man. Put Beethoven in America in the present time and he would have developed into a dangerous anarchist. Such a nature matures rapidly, and a century might have marked the evolution from a despiser of kings to a hater of all forms of restrictive government. But I'm getting in too deep, even for myself, and also far away from my original theme.

Suffice to say that Bach is pedantic when compared to Mozart, and Beethoven unbeautiful. Some day, and there are portents on the musical horizon, some day, I repeat, the reign of beauty

in art will reassert its sway. Too long has Ugly been king, too long have we listened with half-cracked ear-drums to the noises of half-cracked men. Already the new generation is returning to Mozart—that is, to music for music's sake—to the Beautiful.

I went to Salzburg deliberately. I needed a sight of the place, a glimpse of its romantic surroundings, to still my old pulse jangled out of tune by the horrors of Bayreuth. Yes, the truth must out. I went to Bayreuth at the express suggestion of my grandson, Old Fogy 3d, a rip-roaring young blade who writes for a daily paper in your city. What he writes I know not. I only hope he lets music alone. He is supposed to be an authority on foot-ball and Russian caviar; his knowledge of the latter he acquired, so he says, in the great Thirst Belt of the United States. I sincerely hope that Philadelphia is not alluded to! I am also informed that the lad occasionally goes to concerts! Well, he begged me to visit Bayreuth just once before I died. We argued the thing all last June and July at Dussek Villa—you remember my little lodge up in the wilds of Wissahickon!—and at last was I, a sensible old fellow who should have known better, persuaded to sail across the sea to a horrible town, crowded

with cheap tourists, vulgar with cheap musicians, and to hear what? Why, Wagner! There is no need of telling you again what I think of *him*. You know! I really think I left home to escape the terrible heat, and I am quite sure that I left Bayreuth to escape the terrible music. Apart from the fact that it was badly sung and played —who ever does play and sing this music well? —it was written by Wagner, and though I am not a prejudiced person—*ahem!*—I cannot stand noise for noise's sake. Art for art they call it nowadays.

I fled Bayreuth. I reached Munich. The weather was warm, yet of a delightful balminess. I was happy. Had I not got away from Wagner, that odious, *bourgeois* name and man! Munich, I argued, is a musical city. It must be, for it is the second largest beer-drinking city in Germany. Therefore it is given to melody. Besides, I had read of Munich's model Mozart performances. Here, I cried, here will I revel in a lovely atmosphere of art. My German was rather rusty since my Weimar days, but I took my accent, with my courage, in both hands and asked a coachman to drive me to the opera-house. Through green and luscious lanes of foliage this dumpy, red-faced scoundrel drove; by the beautiful Isar, across the magnificent Maximilian

bridge over against the classic *façade* of the Maximilineum. Twisting tortuously about this superb edifice, we tore along another leafy road lined on one side by villas, on the other bordered by a park. Many carriages by this time had joined mine in the chase. What a happy city, I reflected, that enjoys its Mozart with such unanimity! Turning to the right we went at a grand gallop past a villa that I recognized as the Villa Stuck from the old pictures I had seen; past other palaces until we reached a vast space upon which stood a marmoreal pile I knew to be the Mozart theater. What a glorious city is Munich, to thus honor its Mozart! And the building as I neared it resembled, on a superior scale, the Bayreuth barn. But this one was of marble, granite, gold, and iron. Up to the esplanade, up under the massive portico where I gave my coachman a tip that made his mean eyes wink. Then skirting a big beadle in blue, policemen, and loungers, I reached the box-office.

"Have you a stall?" I inquired. "Twenty marks" ($5.00), he asked in turn. "Phew!" I said aloud: "Mozart comes high, but we must have him." So I fetched out my lean purse, fished up a gold piece, put it down, and then an inspiration overtook me—I kept one finger on the money. "Is it *Don Giovanni* or *Magic*

Flute this afternoon?" I demanded. The man stared at me angrily. "What you talk about? It is *Tristan und Isolde*. This is the new Wagner theater!" I must have yelled loudly, for when I recovered the big beadle was slapping my back and urging me earnestly to keep in the open air. And that is why I went to Salzburg!

Despite Bayreuth, despite Munich, despite Wagner, I was soon happy in the old haunts of the man whose music I adore. I went through the Mozart collection, saw all the old pictures, relics, manuscripts, and I reverently fingered the harpsichord, the grand piano of the master. Even the piece of "genuine Court Plaister" from London, and numbered 42 in the catalogue, interested me. After I had read the visitors' book, inscribed therein my own humble signature, after talking to death the husband and wife who act as guardians of these Mozart treasures, I visited the Mozart platz and saw the statue, saw Mozart's residence, and finally—bliss of bliss—ascended the *Kapuzinberg* to the Mozart cottage, where the *Magic Flute* was finished.

Later, several weeks later, when the Wagner municipal delirium had passed, I left Salzburg with a sad heart and returned to Munich. There I was allowed to bathe in Mozart's music and become healed. I heard an excellent perform-

ance of his *Cosi Fan Tutti* at the *Residenz-theater*, an ideal spot for this music. With the accompaniment of an orchestra of thirty, more real music was made and sung than the whole *Ring Cycle* contains. Some day, after my death, without doubt, the world will come back to my way of thinking, and purge its eyes in the Pierian spring of Mozart, cleanse its vision of all the awful sights walled by the dissonantal harmonies of Beethoven, Schumann, Wagner, and Richard Strauss.

I fear that this letter will enrage my grandson; I care not. If he writes, do not waste valuable space on his "copy." I inclose a picture of Mozart that I picked up in Salzburg. If you like it, you have my permission to reproduce it. I am here once more in Mozartland!

V

OLD FOGY DISCUSSES CHOPIN

SINCE my return from the outskirts of Camden, N. J., where I go fishing for planked shad in September, I have been busying myself with the rearrangement of my musical library, truly a delectable occupation for an old man. As I passed through my hands the various and beloved volumes, worn by usage and the passage of the years, I pondered after the fashion of one who has more sentiment than judgment; I said to myself:

"Come, old fellow, here they are, these friends of the past forty years. Here are the yellow and bepenciled Bach *Preludes and Fugues*, the precious 'forty-eight'; here are the Beethoven Sonatas, every bar of which is familiar; here are—yes, the Mozart, Schubert, and Schumann Sonatas [you notice that I am beginning to bracket the batches]; here are Mendelssohn's works, highly glazed as to technical surface, pretty as to sentiment, Bach seen through the lorgnette of a refined, thin, narrow nature. And here are the Chopin compositions." The murder is out—I have jumped from Bach and Beethoven to Chopin without a twinge of

my critical conscience. Why? I hardly know why, except that I was thinking of that mythical desert island and the usual idiotic question: What composers would you select if you were to be marooned on a South Sea Island?—you know the style of question and, alas! the style of answer. You may also guess the composers of my selection. And the least of the three in the last group above named is not Chopin—Chopin, who, as a piano composer pure and simple, still ranks his predecessors, his contemporaries, his successors.

I am sure that the brilliant Mr. Finck, the erudite Mr. Krehbiel, the witty Mr. Henderson, the judicial Mr. Aldrich, the phenomenal Philip Hale, have told us and will tell us all about Chopin's life, his poetry, his technical prowess, his capacity as a pedagogue, his reforms, his striking use of dance forms. Let me contribute my humble and dusty mite; let me speak of a Chopin, of the Chopin, of a Chopin—pardon my tedious manner of address—who has most appealed to me since my taste has been clarified by long experience. I know that it is customary to swoon over Chopin's languorous muse, to counterfeit critical raptures when his name is mentioned. For this reason I dislike exegetical comments on his music. Lives of Chopin from

Liszt to Niecks, Huneker, Hadow, and the rest are either too much given over to dry-as-dust or to rhapsody. I am a teacher of the pianoforte, that good old keyboard which I know will outlive all its mechanical imitators. I have assured you of this fact about fifteen years ago, and I expect to hammer away at it for the next fifteen years if my health and your amiability endure. The Chopin music is written for the piano—a truism!—so why in writing of it are not critics practical? It is the practical Chopin I am interested in nowadays, not the poetic—for the latter quality will always take care of itself.

Primarily among the practical considerations of the Chopin music is the patent fact that only a certain section of his music is studied in private and played in public. And a very limited section it is, as those who teach or frequent piano recitals are able to testify. Why should the *D-flat Valse*, *E-flat* and *G minor Nocturnes*, the *A-flat Ballade*, the *G minor Ballade*, the *B-flat minor Scherzo*, the *Funeral March*, the two *G-flat Etudes*, or, let us add, the *C minor*, the *F minor* and *C-sharp minor studies*, the *G major* and *D-flat preludes*, the *A-flat Polonaise*—or, worse still, the *A major* and *C-sharp minor Polonaises* —the *B minor*, *B-flat major Mazurkas*, the *A-flat* and *C-sharp minor Impromptus*, and last,

though not least, the *Berceuse*—why, I insist, should this group be selected to the exclusion of the rest? for, all told, there is still as good Chopin in the list as ever came out of it.

I know we hear and read much about the "Heroic Chopin", and the "New Chopin"—forsooth!—and "Chopin the Conqueror"; also how to make up a Chopin program—which latter inevitably recalls to my mind the old *crux:* how to be happy though hungry. [Some forms of this conundrum lug in matrimony, a useless intrusion.] How to present a program of Chopin's *neglected* masterpieces might furnish matter for afternoon lectures now devoted to such negligible musical *débris* as Parsifal's neckties and the chewing gum of the flower maidens.

As a matter of fact, the critics are not to blame. I have read the expostulations of Mr. Finck about the untilled fields of Chopin. Yet his favorite Paderewski plays season in and season out a selection from the scheme I have just given, with possibly a few additions. The most versatile—and—also delightful—Chopinist is Pachmann. From his very first afternoon recital at old Chickering Hall, New York, in 1890, he gave a taste of the unfamiliar Chopin. Joseffy, thrice wonderful wizard, who has attained to the height of a true philosophic Parnassus—he

only plays for himself, O wise Son of Light!—also gives at long intervals fleeting visions of the unknown Chopin. To Pachmann belongs the honor of persistently bringing forward to our notice such gems as the *Allegro de Concert*, many new mazurkas, the *F minor*, *F major*—*A minor Ballades*, the *F-sharp* and *G-flat Impromptus*, the *B minor Sonata*, certain of the *Valses*, *Fantasies*, *Krakowiaks*, *Preludes*, *Studies* and *Polonaises*—to mention a few. And his pioneer work may be easily followed by a dozen other lists, all new to concert-goers, all equally interesting. Chopin still remains a sealed book to the world, notwithstanding the ink spilled over his name every other minute of the clock's busy traffic with Eternity.

A fair moiety of this present chapter could be usurped by a detailed account of the beauties of the Unheard Chopin—you see I am emulating the critics with my phrase-making. But I am not the man to accomplish such a formidable task. I am too old, too disillusioned. The sap of a generous enthusiasm no longer stirs in my veins. Let the young fellows look to the matter—it is their affair. However, as I am an inveterate busybody I cannot refrain from an attempt to enlist your sympathies for some of my favorite Chopin.

Do you know the *E major Scherzo, Op. 54*, with its skimming, swallowlike flight, its delicate figuration, its evanescent hintings at a serious something in the major trio? Have you ever heard Pachmann *purl* through this exquisitely conceived, contrived and balanced composition, truly a classic? *Whaur* is your Willy Mendelssohn the *noo?* Or are you acquainted with the *G-sharp minor Prelude?* Do you play the *E-flat Scherzo* from the *B minor Sonata?* Have you never shed a furtive tear—excuse my old-fashioned romanticism—over the bars of the *B major Larghetto* in the same work? [The last movement is pure passage writing, yet clever as only Chopin knew how to be clever without being offensively gaudy.]

How about the first *Scherzo in B minor?* You play it, but do you understand its ferocious irony? [Oh, author of *Chopin: the Man and his Music*, what sins of rhetoric must be placed at your door!] And what of the *E-flat minor Scherzo?* Is it merely an excuse for blacksmith art and is the following *finale* only a study in unisons? There is the *C-sharp minor Prelude.* In it Brahms is anticipated by a quarter of a century. The *Polonaise in F-sharp minor* was damned years ago by Liszt, who found that it contained pathologic states. What of it? It is

Chopin's masterpiece in this form and for that reason is seldom played in public. Why? My children, do you not know by this time that the garden variety of pianoforte virtuoso will play difficult music if the difficulties be technical not emotional, or emotional and not spiritual?

The F-sharp minor Polonaise is always *drummed* on the keyboard because some silly story got into print about Chopin's aunt asking the composer for a picture of his soul battling with the soul of his pet foe, the Russians. Militant the work is not, as swinging as are its resilient rhythms: granted that the gloomy repetitions betray a morbid dwelling upon some secret, exasperating sorrow; but as the human soul never experiences the same mood *twice* in a lifetime, so Chopin never means his passages, identical as they may be, to be repeated in the same mood-key. Liszt, Tausig, and Rubinstein taught us the supreme art of color variation in the repetition of a theme. Paderewski knows the trick; so do Joseffy and Pachmann—the latter's *pianissimi* begin where other men's cease. So the accusation of tonal or thematic monotony should not be brought against this *Polonaise*. Rather let us blame our imperfect sympathies and slender stock of the art of *nuance*.

But here I am pinning myself down to one

composition, when I wish to touch lightly on so many! The *F minor Polonaise*, the *E-flat minor Polonaise*, called the *Siberian*—why I don't know; *I* could never detect in its mobile measures the clanking of convict chains or the dreary landscape of Siberia—might be played by way of variety; and then there is the *C minor Polonaise*, which begins in tones of epic grandeur [go it, old man, you will be applying for a position on the Manayunk *Herbalist* soon as a critic!] The *Nocturnes*—are they all familiar to you? The *F-sharp minor* was a positive novelty a few years ago when Joseffy exhumed it, while the *C-sharp minor*, with its strong climaxes, its middle sections so evocative of Beethoven's *Sonata* in the same key—have you mastered its content? *The Preludes* are a perfect field for the "prospector"; though Essipoff and Arthur Friedheim played them in a single program. Nor must we overlook the so-called hackneyed valses, the tinkling charm of the one in *G-flat*, the elegiac quality of the one in *B minor*. The *Barcarolle* is only for heroes. So I do not set it down in malice against the student or the every-day virtuosos that he—or she—does not attempt it. The *F minor Fantaisie*, I am sorry to say, is beginning to be tarnished like the *A-flat Ballade*, by impious hands. It is not for weak-

lings; nor are the other Fantaisies. Why not let us hear the *Bolero* and *Tarantella*, not Chopin at his happiest, withal Chopin. Emil Sauer made a success of other brilliant birdlike music before an America public. As for the *Ballades*, I can no longer endure any but *Op. 38* and *Op. 52*. Rosenthal played the beautiful *D-flat Study* in *Les Trois nouvelles Etudes* with signal results. It is a valse in disguise. And its neighbors in *A-flat* and *F minor* are Chopin in his most winning moods. Who, except Pachmann, essays the *G-flat major Impromptu*—wrongfully catalogued as *Des Dur* in the Klindworth edition? To be sure, it resumes many traits of the two preceding *Impromptus*, yet is it none the less fascinating music. And the *Mazurkas*—I refuse positively to discuss at the present writing such a fertile theme. I am fatigued already, and I feel that my antique vaporings have fatigued you. Next month I shall stick to my leathery last, like the musical shoemaker that I am—I shall consider to some length the use of left-hand passage work in the Hummel sonatas. Or shall I speak of Chopin again, of the Chopin mazurkas! My sour bones become sweeter when I think of Chopin—ah, there I go again! Am I, too, among the rhapsodists?

VI

MORE ANENT CHOPIN

I HAD fully intended at the conclusion of my last chapter to close the curtain on Chopin and his music, for I agree with the remark Deppe once made to Amy Fay about the advisability of putting Chopin on the shelf for half a century and studying Mozart in the interim. Bless the dear Germans and their thoroughness! The type of teacher to which Deppe belonged always proceeded as if a pupil, like a cat, had nine lives. Fifty years of Chopin on the shelf! There's an idea for you. At the conclusion of this half century's immurement what would the world say to the Polish composer's music? That is to say, in 1955 the unknown inhabitants of the musical portion of this earth would have sprung upon them absolutely new music. The excitement would be colossal, colossal, too, would be the advertising. And then? And then I fancy a chorus of profoundly disappointed lovers of the tone art. Remember that the world moves in fifty years. Perhaps there would be no longer our pianoforte, our keyboard. How childish, how simple would

sound the timid little Chopin of the far-away nineteenth century.

In the turbulent times to come music will have lost its personal flavor. Instead of interpretative artists there will be gigantic machinery capable of maniacal displays of virtuosity; merely dropping a small coin in a slot will sound the most abstruse scores of Richard Strauss—then the popular and bewhistled music maker. And yet it is difficult for us, so wedded are we to that tragic delusion of earthly glory and artistic immortality, to conjure up a day when the music of Chopin shall be stale and unprofitable to the hearing. For me the idea is inconceivable. Some of his music has lost interest for us, particularly the early works modeled after Hummel. Ehlert speaks of the twilight that is beginning to steal over certain of the nocturnes, valses, and fantasias. Now Hummel is quite perfect in his way. To imitate him, as Chopin certainly did, was excellent practice for the younger man, but not conducive to originality. Chopin soon found this out, and dropped both Hummel and Field out of his scheme. Nor shall I insist on the earlier impositions being the weaker; *Op. 10* contains all Chopin in its twelve studies. The truth is, that this Chopin, to whom has been assigned two or three or four periods and styles

and manners of development, sprang from the Minerva head of music a full-fledged genius. He grew. He lived. But the exquisite art was there from the first. That it had a "long foreground" I need not tell you.

What compositions, then, would our mythic citizens of 1955 prefer?—can't you see them crowding around the concert grand piano listening to the old-fashioned strains as we listen today when some musical antiquarian gives a recital of Scarlatti, Couperin, Rameau on a clavecin! Still, as Mozart and Bach are endurable now, there is no warrant for any supposition that Chopin would not be tolerated a half century hence. Fancy those sprightly, spiritual, and very national dances, the mazurkas, not making an impression! Or at least two of the ballades! Or three of the nocturnes! Not to mention the polonaises, preludes, scherzos, and etudes. Simply from curiosity the other night—I get so tired playing checkers—I went through all my various editions of Chopin—about ten—looking for trouble. I found it when I came across five mazurkas in the key of C-sharp minor. I have arrived at the conclusion that this was a favorite tonality of the Pole. Let us see.

Two studies in *Op. 10* and *25*, respectively; the *Fantaisie-Impromptu*, *Op. 66;* five *Mazurkas*,

above mentioned; one *Nocturne, Op. 27, No. 1;* one *Polonaise, Op. 26, No. 1;* one *Prelude, Op. 45;* one *Scherzo, Op. 39;* and a short second section, a *cantabile* in the *E major Scherzo, Op. 54;* one *Valse, Op. 64, No. 2*—are there any more in C-sharp minor? If there are I cannot recall them. But this is a good showing for one key, and a minor one. Little wonder Chopin was pronounced elegiac in his tendencies—C-sharp minor is a mournful key and one that soon develops a cloying, morbid quality if too much insisted upon.

The mazurkas are worthy specimens of their creator's gift for varying not only a simple dance form, but also in juggling with a simple melodic idea so masterfully that the hearer forgets he is hearing a three-part composition on a keyboard. Chopin was a magician. The first of the *Mazurkas in C-sharp minor* bears the early *Op. 6, No. 2.* By no means representative, it is nevertheless interesting and characteristic. That brief introduction with its pedal bass sounds the rhythmic life of the piece. I like it; I like the dance proper; I like the major—you see the peasant girls on the green footing away—and the ending is full of a sad charm. *Op. 30, No. 4,* the next in order, is bigger in conception, bigger in workmanship. It is not so cheerful, perhaps, as its predecessor

in the same key; the heavy basses twanging in tenths like a contrabasso are intentionally monotone in effect. There is defiance and despair in the mood. And look at the line before the last—those consecutive fifths and sevenths were not placed there as a whim; they mean something. Here is a mazurka that will be heard later than 1955! By the way, while you are loitering through this Op. 30 do not neglect No. 3, the stunning specimen in D-flat. It is my favorite mazurka.

Now let us hurry on to *Op. 41, No. 1.* It well repays careful study. Note the grip our composer has on the theme, it bobs up in the middle voices; it comes thundering at the close in octave and chordal *unisons*, it rumbles in the bass and is persistently asserted by the soprano voice. Its scale is unusual, the atmosphere not altogether cheerful. Chopin could be depressingly pessimistic at times. *Op. 50, No. 3*, shows how closely the composer studied his Bach. It is by all odds the most elaborately worked out of the series, difficult to play, difficult to grasp in its rather disconnected procession of moods. To me it has a clear ring of exasperation, as if Chopin had lost interest, but perversely determined to finish his idea. As played by Pachmann, we get it in all its peevish, sardonic humors,

especially if the audience, or the weather, or the piano seat does not suit the fat little blackbird from Odessa. *Op. 63, No. 3*, ends this list of mazurkas in C-sharp minor. In it Chopin has limbered up, his mood is freer, melancholy as it is. Louis Ehlert wrote of this: "A more perfect canon in the octave could not have been written by one who had grown gray in the learned arts." Those last few bars prove that Chopin—they once called him amateurish in his harmonies!—could do what he pleased in the contrapuntal line.

Shall I continue? Shall I insist on the obvious; hammer in my truisms! It may be possible that out here on the Wissahickon—where the summer hiccoughs grow—that I do not get all the news of the musical world. Yet I vainly scan piano recital programs for such numbers as those C-sharp minor mazurkas, for the *F minor Ballade*, for that beautiful and extremely original *Ballade Op. 38* which begins in F and ends in A minor. Isn't there a legend to the effect that Schumann heard Chopin play his *Ballade* in private and that there was no stormy middle measures? I've forgotten the source, possibly one of the greater Chopinist's—or *Chopine*-ists, as they had it in Paris. What a stumbling-block that A minor explosion was to audiences and

students and to pianists themselves. "Too wild, too wild!" I remember hearing the old guard exclaim when Rubinstein, after miraculously prolonging the three A's with those singing fingers of his, not forgetting the pedals, smashed down the keyboard, gobbling up the sixteenth notes, not in phrases, but pages. How grandly he rolled out those bass scales, the chords in the treble transformed into a *Cantus Firmus*. Then, his Calmuck features all afire, he would begin to smile gently and lo!—the tiny, little tune, as if children had unconsciously composed it at play! The last page was carnage. Port Arthur was stormed and captured in every bar. What a pianist, what an artist, what a *man!*

I suppose it is because my imagination weakens with my years—remember that I read in the daily papers the news of Chopin's death! I do long for a definite program to be appended to the *F-major Ballade*. Why not offer a small prize for the best program and let me be judge? I have also reached the time of life when the *A-flat Ballade* affects my nerves, just as Liszt was affected when a pupil brought for criticism the *G minor Ballade*. Preserve me from the *Third Ballade!* It is winning, gracious, delicate, capricious, melodic, poetic, and what not, but it has gone to meet the *D-flat Valse* and *E-flat Nocturne*—as

the obituaries say. The fourth, the *F minor Ballade*—ah, you touch me in a weak spot. Sticking for over a half century to Bach so closely, I imagine that the economy of thematic material and the ingeniously spun fabric of this *Ballade* have made it my pet. I do not dwell upon the loveliness of the first theme in F minor, or of that melodious approach to it in the major. I am speaking now of the composition as a whole. Its themes are varied with consummate ease, and you wonder at the corners you so easily turn, bringing into view newer horizons; fresh and striking landscapes. When you are once afloat on those D-flat scales, four pages from the end nothing can stop your progress. Every bar slides nearer and nearer to the climax, which is seemingly chaos for the moment. After that the air clears and the whole work soars skyward on mighty pinions. I quite agree with those who place in the same category the *F minor Fantaisie* with this *Ballade*. And it is not much played. Nor can the mechanical instruments reproduce its nuances, its bewildering pathos and passion. I see the musical mob of 1955 deeply interested when the Paderewski of those days puts it on his program as a gigantic novelty!

You see, here I have been blazing away at the

same old target again, though we had agreed to drop Chopin last month. I can't help it. I felt choked off in my previous article and now the *dam* has overflowed, though I hope not the reader's! While I think of it, some one wrote me asking if Chopin's first *Sonata in C minor, Op. 4*, was worth the study. Decidedly, though it is as dry as a Kalkbrenner Sonata for Sixteen Pianos and forty-five hands. The form clogged the light of the composer. Two things are worthy of notice in many pages choked with notes: there is a menuet, the only essay I recall of Chopin's in this graceful, artificial form; and the Larghetto is in $\frac{5}{4}$ time—also a novel rhythm, and not very grateful. How Chopin reveled when he reached the *B-flat minor* and *B minor Sonatas* and threw formal physic to the dogs! I had intended devoting a portion of this chapter to the difference of old-time and modern methods in piano teaching. Alas! my unruly pen ran away with me!

VII

PIANO PLAYING TODAY AND YESTERDAY

HOW to listen to a teacher! How to profit by his precepts! Better still—How to practice after he has left the house! There are three titles for essays, pedagogic and otherwise, which might be supplemented by a fourth: How to pay promptly the music master's bills. But I do not propose indulging in any such generalities this beautiful day in late winter. First, let me rid the minds of my readers of a delusion. I am no longer a piano teacher, nor do I give lessons by mail. I am a very old fellow, fond of chatting, fond of reminiscences; with the latter I bore my listeners, I am sure. Nevertheless, I am not old in spirit, and I feel the liveliest curiosity in matters pianistic, matters musical. Hence, this month I will make a hasty comparison between new and old fashions in teaching the pianoforte. If you have patience with me you may hear something of importance; otherwise, if there is skating down your way don't miss it—fresh air is always healthier than esthetic gabbling.

Do they teach the piano better in the twentieth

century than in the nineteenth? Yes, absolutely yes. When a young man survived the "old fogy" methods of the fifties, sixties and seventies of the past century, he was, it cannot be gainsaid, an excellent artist. But he was, as a rule, the survival of the fittest. For one of him successful there were one thousand failures. Strong hands, untiring patience and a deeply musical temperament were needed to withstand the absurd soulless drilling of the fingers. Unduly prolonged, the immense amount of dry studies, the antique disregard of fore-arm and upper-arm and the comparatively restricted repertory—well, it was a stout body and a robust musical temperament that rose superior to such cramping pedagogy. And then, too, the ideals of the pianist were quite different. It is only in recent years that tone has become an important factor in the scheme—thanks to Chopin, Thalberg and Liszt. In the early sixties we believed in velocity and clearness and brilliancy. Kalkbrenner, Herz, Dreyschock, Döhler, Thalberg—those were the lively boys who patrolled the keyboard like the north wind—brisk but chilly. I must add that the most luscious and melting tone I ever heard on the piano was produced by Thalberg and after him Henselt. Today Paderewski is the best exponent of their school; of

course, modified by modern ideas and a Slavic temperament.

But now technic no longer counts. Be ye as fleet as Rosenthal and as pure as Pachmann—in a tonal sense—ye will not escape comparison with the mechanical pianist. It was their astounding accuracy that extorted from Eugen d'Albert a confession made to a friend of mine just before he sailed to this country last month:

"A great pianist should no longer bother himself about his technic. Any machine can beat him at the game. What he must excel in is—interpretation and tone."

Rosenthal, angry that a mere contrivance manipulated by a salesman could beat his speed, has taken the slopes of Parnassus by storm. He can play the Liszt *Don Juan* paraphrase *faster* than any machine in existence. (I refer to the drinking song, naturally.) But how few of us have attained such transcendental technic? None except Rosenthal, for I really believe if Karl Tausig would return to earth he would be dazzled by Rosenthal's performances—say, for example, of the Brahms-Paganini *Studies* and, Liszt, in his palmy days, never had such a technic as Tausig's; while the latter was far more musical and intellectual than Rosenthal. Other days, other ways!

So tone, not technic alone, is our shibboleth. How many teachers realize this? How many still commit the sin of transforming their pupils into machines, developing muscle at the expense of music! To be sure, some of the old teachers considered the second F minor sonata of Beethoven the highest peak of execution and confined themselves to teaching Mozart and Field, Cramer and Mendelssohn, with an occasional fantasia by Thalberg—the latter to please the proud papa after dessert. Schumann was not understood; Chopin was misunderstood; and Liszt was *anathema.* Yet we often heard a sweet, singing tone, even if the mechanism was not above the normal. I am sure those who had the pleasure of listening to William Mason will recall the exquisite purity of his tone, the limpidity of his scales, the neat finish of his phrasing. Old style, I hear you say! Yes, old and ever new, because approaching more nearly perfection than the splashing, floundering, fly-by-night, hysterical, smash-the-ivories school of these latter days. Music, not noise—that's what we are after in piano playing, the *higher* piano playing. All the rest is pianola-istic!

Singularly enough, with the shifting of technical standards, more simplicity reigns in methods of teaching at this very moment. The reason

is that so much more is expected in variety of technic; therefore, no unnecessary time can be spared. If a modern pianist has not at *fifteen* mastered all the tricks of finger, wrist, fore-arm and upper-arm he should study bookkeeping or the noble art of football. Immense are the demands made upon the memory. Whole volumes of fugues, sonatas of Chopin, Liszt, Schumann and the new men are memorized, as a matter of course. Better wrong notes, in the estimation of the more superficial musical public, than playing with the music on the piano desk. And then to top all these terrible things, you must have the physique of a sailor, the nerves of a woman, the impudence of a prize-fighter, and the humility of an innocent child. Is it any wonder that, paradoxical as it may sound, there are fewer great pianists today in public than there were fifty years ago, yet ten times as many pianists!

The big saving, then, in the pianistic curriculum is the dropping of studies, finger and otherwise. To give him his due, Von Bülow—as a pianist strangely inimical to my taste—was among the first to boil down the number of etudes. He did this in his famous preface to the Cramer *Studies*. Nevertheless, his list is too long by half. Who plays Moscheles? Who cares for more than four or six of the Clementi, for a half dozen of the

Cramer? I remember the consternation among certain teachers when Deppe and Raif, with his dumb thumb and blind fingers, abolished *all* the classic piano studies. Teachers like Constantine von Sternberg do the same at this very hour, finding in the various technical figures of compositions all the technic necessary. This method is infinitely more trying to the teacher than the old-fashioned, easy-going ways. "Play me No. 22 for next time!" was the order, and in a soporific manner the pupil waded through all the studies of all the *Technikers*. Now the teacher must invent a new study for every new piece—with Bach on the side. Always Bach! Please remember that. B-a-c-h—Bach. Your daily bread, my children.

We no longer play Mozart in public—except Joseffy. I was struck recently by something Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler said in this matter of Mozart. Yes, Mozart is more difficult than Chopin, though not so difficult as Bach. Mozart is so naked and unafraid! You must touch the right key or forever afterward be condemned by your own blundering. Let me add here that I heard Fannie Bloomfield play the little sonata, wrongfully called *facile*, when she was a tiny, ox-eyed girl of six or seven. It was in Chicago in the seventies. Instead of asking for candy

afterwards she begged me to read her some poetry of Shelley or something by Schopenhauer! Veritably a fabulous child!

Let me add three points to the foregoing statements: First, Joseffy has always been rather skeptical of too *few* piano studies. His argument is that *endurance* is also a prime factor of technic, and you cannot compass endurance without you endure prolonged finger drills. But as he has since composed—literally composed—the most extraordinary time-saving book of technical studies (*School of Advanced Piano Playing*), I suspect the great virtuoso has dropped from his list all the Heller, Hiller, Czerny, Haberbier, Cramer, Clementi and Moscheles. Certainly his Exercises—as he meekly christens them—are *multum in parvo.* They are my daily recreation.

The next point I would have you remember is this: The morning hours are golden. Never waste them, the first thing, never waste your sleep-freshened brain on mechanical finger exercise. Take up Bach, if you must unlimber your fingers and your wits. But even Bach should be kept for afternoon and evening. I shall never forget Moriz Rosenthal's amused visage when I, in the innocence of my eighteenth century soul, put this question to him: "When is the best time to

study etudes?" "If you must study them at all, do so after your day's work is done. By your day's work I mean the mastery of the sonata or piece you are working at. When your brain is clear you can compass technical difficulties much better in the morning than the evening. Don't throw away those hours. Any time will do for gymnastics." Now there is something for stubborn teachers to put in their pipes and smoke.

My last injunction is purely a mechanical one. All the pianists I have heard with a beautiful tone—Thalberg, Henselt, Liszt, Tausig, Heller—yes, Stephen of the pretty studies—Rubinstein, Joseffy, Paderewski, Pachmann and Essipoff, sat *low* before the keyboard. When you sit high and the wrists dip downward your tone will be dry, brittle, hard. Doubtless a few pianists with abnormal muscles have escaped this, for there was a time when octaves were played with stiff wrists and rapid *tempo*. Both things are an abomination, and the exception here does not prove the rule. Pianists like Rosenthal, Busoni, Friedheim, d'Albert, Von Bülow, *all the Great Germans* (Germans are not born, but are made piano players), Carreño, Aus der Ohe, Krebs, Mehlig are or were artists with a hard tone. As for the much-vaunted Leschetizky method I can only say that I have heard but two

of his pupils whose tone was *not* hard and too brilliant. Paderewski was one of these. Paderewski confessed to me that he learned how to play billiards from Leschetizky, not piano; though, of course, he will deny this, as he is very loyal. The truth is that he learned more from Essipoff than from her then husband, the much-married Theodor Leschetizky.

Pachmann, once at a Dôhnányi recital in New York, called out in his accustomed frank fashion: "He sits too high." It was true. Dôhnányi's touch is as hard as steel. He sat *over* the keyboard and played *down* on the keys, thus striking them heavily, instead of pressing and moulding the tone. Pachmann's playing is a notable example of plastic beauty. He seems to dip his hands into musical liquid instead of touching inanimate ivory, and bone, wood, and wire. Remember this when you begin your day's work: Sit so that your hand is on a level with, never below, the keyboard; and don't waste your morning freshness on dull finger gymnastics! Have I talked you hoarse?

VIII

FOUR FAMOUS VIRTUOSOS

SUCH a month of dissipation! You must know that at my time of life I run down a bit every spring, and our family physician prescribed a course of scale exercises on the Boardwalk at Atlantic City, and after that—New York, for Lenten recreation! Now, New York is not quiet, nor is it ever Lenten. A crowded town, huddled on an island far too small for its inconceivably uncivilized population, its inhabitants can never know the value of leisure or freedom from noise. Because he is always in a hurry a New York man fancies that he is intellectual. The consequences artistically are dire. New York boasts—yes, literally *boasts*—the biggest, noisiest, and poorest orchestra in the country. I refer to the Philharmonic Society, with its wretched wood-wind, its mediocre brass, and its aggregation of rasping strings. All the vaudeville and lightning-change conductors have not put this band on a level with the Boston, the Philadelphia, or the Chicago organizations. Nor does the opera please me much better. Noise,

at the expense of music; quantity, instead of quality; all the *tempi* distorted and *fortes* exaggerated, so as to make effect. Effect, effect, effect! That is the ideal of New York conductors. This coarsening, cheapening, and magnification of details are resultants of the restless, uncomfortable, and soulless life of the much overrated Manhattan.

Naturally, I am a Philadelphian, and my strictures will be set down to old fogyism. But show me a noise-loving city and I will show you an inartistic one. Schopenhauer was right in this matter; insensibility to noise argues a less refined organism. And New York may spend a million of money on music every season, and still it is not a musical city. The opera is the least sign; opera is a social function—sometimes a circus, never a temple of art. The final, the infallible test is the maintenance of an orchestra. New York has no permanent orchestra; though there is an attempt to make of the New York Symphony Society a worthy rival to the Philadelphia and Boston orchestras. So much for my enjoyment in the larger forms of music—symphony, oratorio and opera.

But my visit was not without compensations. I attended piano concerts by Eugen d'Albert, Ignace Jan Paderewski, and Rafael Joseffy.

Pachmann I had heard earlier in the season in my own home city. So in one season I listened to four out of six of the world's greatest pianists. And it was very stimulating to both ears and memory. It also affords me an opportunity to preach for you a little sermon on Touch (Tone and Technic were the respective themes of my last two letters), which I have had in my mind for some time. Do not be alarmed. I say "sermon," but I mean nothing more than a comparison of modern methods of touch, as exemplified by the performances of the above four men, with the style of touch employed by the pianists of my generation: Thalberg, Liszt, Gottschalk, Tausig, Rubinstein, Von Bülow, Henselt, and a few others.

Pachmann is the same little wonder-worker that I knew when he studied many years ago in Vienna with Dachs. This same Dachs turned out some finished pupils, though his reputation, curiously enough, never equalled that of the over-puffed Leschetizky, or Epstein, or Anton Door, all teachers in the Austrian capital. I recall Anthony Stankowitch, now in Chicago, and Benno Schoenberger, now in London, as Dachs' pupils. Schoenberger has a touch of gold and a style almost as jeweled as Pachmann's—but more virile. It must not be forgotten that

Pachmann has fine nerves—with such an exquisite touch, his organization must be of supernal delicacy—but little muscular vigor. Consider his narrow shoulders and slender arms—height of figure has nothing to do with muscular incompatibility; d'Albert is almost a dwarf, yet a colossus of strength. So let us call Pachmann, a survival of an older school, a charming school. Touch was the shibboleth of that school, not tone; and technic was often achieved at the expense of more spiritual qualities. The three most *beautiful* touches of the piano of the nineteenth century were those of Chopin, Thalberg, and Henselt. Apart from any consideration of other gifts, these three men—a Pole, a Hebrew, and a German—possessed touches that sang and melted in your ears, ravished your ears. Finer in a vocal sense was Thalberg's touch than Liszt's; finer Henselt's than Thalberg's, because more euphonious, and nobler in tonal texture; and more poetic than either of these two was Chopin's ethereal touch. To-day Joseffy is the nearest approach we have to Chopin, Paderewski to Henselt, Pachmann to Thalberg—save in the matter of a robust *fortissimo*, which the tiny Russian virtuoso does not boast.

After Chopin, Thalberg, and Henselt, the orchestral school had its sway—it still has. Liszt,

Tausig, Rubinstein set the pace for all latter-day piano playing. And while it may sound presumptuous, I am inclined to think that their successors are not far behind them in the matter of tonal volume. If Liszt or Tausig, or, for that matter, Rubinstein, produced more clangor from their instruments than Eugen d'Albert, then my aural memory is at fault. My recollection of Liszt is a vivid one: to me he was iron; Tausig, steel; Rubinstein, gold. This metallic classification is not intended to praise gold at the expense of steel, or iron to the detriment of gold. It is merely my way of describing the adamantine qualities of Liszt and Tausig—two magnetic mountains of the kind told of in *Sinbad, the Sailor*, to which was attracted whatever came within their radius. And Rubinstein—what a man, what an artist, what a *heart!* As Joseffy once put it, Rubinstein's was not a pianist's touch, but the mellow tone of a French horn!

Rosenthal's art probably matches Tausig's in technic and tone. Paderewski, who has broadened and developed amazingly during ten years, has many of Henselt's traits—and I am sure he never heard the elder pianist. But he belongs to that group: tonal euphony, supple technic, a caressing manner, and a perfect control of self. Remember, I am speaking of the

Henselt who played for a few friends, not the frightened, semi-limp pianist who emerged at long intervals before the public. Paderewski is thrice as poetic as Henselt—who in the matter of emotional depth seldom attempted any more than the delineation of the suave and elegant, though he often played Weber with glorious fire and brilliancy.

At this moment it is hard to say where Paderewski will end. I beg to differ from Mr. Edward Baxter Perry, who once declared that the Polish virtuoso played at his previous season no different from his earlier visits. The Paderewski of 1902 and 1905 is very unlike the Paderewski of 1891. His style more nearly approximates Rubinstein's *plus* the refinement of the Henselt school. He has sacrificed certain qualities. That was inevitable. All great art is achieved at the expense—either by suppression or enlargement—of something precious. Paderewski pounds more; nor is he always letter perfect; but do not forget that pounding from Paderewski is not the same as pounding from Tom, Dick, and Harry. And, like Rubinstein, his spilled notes are more valuable than other pianist's scrupulously played ones. In reality, after carefully watching the career of this remarkable man, I have reached the conclusion that he is

passing through a transition period in his "pianism." Tired of his old, subdued, poetic manner; tired of being called a *salon* pianist by—yes, Oskar Bie said so in his book on the pianoforte; and in the same chapter wrote of the fire and fury of Gabrilowitsch ("he drives the horses of Rubinstein," said Bie; he must have meant "ponies!")—critics, Paderewski began to study the grand manner. He may achieve it, for his endurance is phenomenal. Any pianist who could do what I heard him do in New York—give eight encores after an exhausting program—may well lay claim to the possession of the grand manner. His tone is still forced; you hear the *chug* of the suffering wires; but who cares for details—when the general performance is on so exalted a plane? And his touch is absolutely luscious in cantabile.

With d'Albert our interest is, nowadays, cerebral. When he was a youth he upset Weimar with his volcanic performances. Rumor said that he came naturally by his superb gifts (the Tausig legend is still believed in Germany). Now his indifference to his medium of expression does not prevent him from lavishing upon the interpretation of masterpieces the most intellectual brain since Von Bülow's—and *entre nous*, ten times the musical equipment. D'Albert plays Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms as

no one else on this globe—and he matches Paderewski in his merciless abuse of the keyboard. Either a new instrument, capable of sustaining the ferocious attacks upon it, must be fabricated, or else there must be a return to older styles.

And that fixed star in the pianistic firmament, one who refuses to descend to earth and please the groundlings—Rafael Joseffy—is for me the most satisfying of all the pianists. Never any excess of emotional display; never silly sentimentalizings, but a lofty, detached style, impeccable technic, tone as beautiful as starlight—yes, Joseffy is the enchanter who wins me with his disdainful spells. I heard him play the Chopin E minor and the Liszt A major concertos; also a brace of encores. Perfection! The Liszt was not so brilliant as Reisenauer; but—again within its frame—perfection! The Chopin was as Chopin would have had it given in 1840. And there were refinements of tone-color undreamed of even by Chopin. Paderewski is Paderewski—and Joseffy is perfection. Paderewski is the most eclectic of the four pianists I have taken for my text; Joseffy the most subtly poetic; D'Albert the most profound and intellectually significant, and Pachmann—well, Vladimir is the *enfant terrible* of the quartet, a whimsical, fantastic

charmer, an apparition with rare talents, and an interpreter of the Lesser Chopin (always the *great* Chopin) without a peer. Let us be happy that we are vouchsafed the pleasure of hearing four such artists.

IX

THE INFLUENCE OF DADDY LISZT

HAVE you read Thoreau's *Walden* with its smell of the woods and its ozone-permeated pages? I recommend the book to all pianists, especially to those pianists who hug the house, practising all day and laboring under the delusion that they are developing their individuality. Singular thing, this rage for culture nowadays among musicians! They have been admonished so often in print and private that their ignorance is not blissful, indeed it is baneful, that these ambitious ladies and gentlemen rush off to the booksellers, to libraries, and literally gorge themselves with the "ologies" and "isms" of the day. Lord, Lord, how I enjoy meeting them at a musicale! There they sit, cocked and primed for a verbal encounter, waiting to knock the literary chip off their neighbor's shoulder.

"Have you read"—begins some one and the chattering begins, *furioso*. "Oh, Nietzsche? why of course,"—"Tolstoi's *What is Art?* certainly, he ought to be electrocuted"—"Nordau! isn't he terrible?" And the cacophonous con-

versational symphony rages, and when it is spent, the man who asked the question finishes:

"Have you read the notice of Rosenthal's playing in the *Kölnische Zeitung?*" and there is a battery of suspicious looks directed towards him whilst murmurs arise, "What an uncultured man! To talk 'shop' like a regular musician!" The fact being that the man had read everything, but was setting a trap for the vanity of these egregious persons. The newspapers, the managers and the artists before the public are to blame for this callow, shallow attempt at culture. We read that Rosenthal is a second Heine in conversation. That he spills epigrams at his meals and dribbles proverbs at the piano. He has committed all of Heine to memory and in the green-room reads Sanscrit. Paderewski, too, is profoundly something or other. Like Wagner, he writes his own program—I mean plots for his operas. He is much given to reading Swinburne because some one once compared him to the bad, mad, sad, glad, fad poet of England, begad! As for Sauer, we hardly know where to begin. He writes blank verse tragedies and discusses Ibsen with his landlady. Pianists are now so intellectual that they sometimes forget to play the piano well.

Of course, Daddy Liszt began it all. He had

read everything before he was twenty, and had embraced and renegaded from twenty religions. This volatile, versatile, vibratile, vivacious, vicious temperament of his has been copied by most modern pianists who haven't brains enough to parse a sentence or play a Bach *Invention*. The Weimar crew all imitated Liszt's style in octaves and hair dressing. I was there once, a sunny day in May, the hedges white with flowers and the air full of bock-bier. Ah, thronging memories of youth! I was slowly walking through a sun-smitten lane when a man on horse dashed by me, his face red with excitement, his beast covered with lather. He kept shouting "Make room for the master! make way for the master!" and presently a venerable man with a purple nose —a Cyrano de Cognac nose—came towards me. He wore a monkish habit and on his head was a huge shovel-shaped hat, the sort affected by Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville*.

"It must be Liszt or the devil!" I cried aloud, and Liszt laughed, his warts growing purple, his whole expression being one of good-humor. He invited me to refreshment at the Czerny House, but I refused. During the time he stood talking to me a throng of young Liszts gathered about us. I call them "young Liszts" because they mimicked the old gentleman in an out-

rageous manner. They wore their hair on their shoulders, they sprinkled it with flour; they even went to such lengths as to paint purplish excrescences on their chins and brows. They wore semi-sacerdotal robes, they held their hands in the peculiar and affected style of Liszt, and they one and all wore shovel hats. When Liszt left me—we studied together with Czerny—they trooped after him, their garments ballooning in the breeze, and upon their silly faces was the devotion of a pet ape.

I mention this because I have never met a Liszt pupil since without recalling that day in Weimar. And when one plays I close my eyes and hear the frantic effort to copy Liszt's bad touch and supple, sliding, treacherous technic. Liszt, you may not know, had a wretched touch. The old boy was conscious of it, for he told William Mason once, "Don't copy my touch; it's spoiled." He had for so many years pounded and punched the keyboard that his tactile sensibility—isn't that your new-fangled expression?—had vanished. His "orchestral" playing was one of those pretty fables invented by hypnotized pupils like Amy Fay, Aus der Ohe, and other enthusiastic but not very critical persons. I remember well that Liszt, who was first and foremost a melodramatic actor, had a habit of striding to the instrument,

sitting down in a magnificent manner and uplifting his big fists as if to annihilate the ivories. He was a master hypnotist, and like John L. Sullivan he had his adversary—the audience—conquered before he struck a blow. His glance was terrific, his "nerve" enormous. What he did afterward didn't much matter. He usually accomplished a hard day's threshing with those flail-like arms of his, and, heavens, how the poor piano objected to being taken for a barn-floor!

Touch! Why, Thalberg had the touch, a touch that Liszt secretly envied. In the famous Paris duel that followed the visits of the pair to Paris, Liszt was heard to a distinct disadvantage. He wrote articles about himself in the musical papers—a practice that his disciples have not failed to emulate—and in an article on Thalberg displayed his bad taste in abusing what he could not imitate. Oh yes, Liszt was a great thief. His piano music—I mean his so-called original music—is nothing but Chopin and brandy. His pyrotechnical effects are borrowed from Paganini, and as soon as a new head popped up over the musical horizon he helped himself to its hair. So in his piano music we find a conglomeration of other men's ideas, other men's figures. When he wrote for orchestra the hand is the hand of Liszt, but the voice is that of Hector Berlioz.

I never could quite see Liszt. He hung on to Chopin until the suspicious Pole got rid of him and then he strung after Wagner. I do not mean that Liszt was without merit, but I do assert that he should have left the piano a piano, and not tried to transform it to a miniature orchestra.

Let us consider some of his compositions.

Liszt began with machine-made fantasias on faded Italian operas—not, however, faded in his time. He devilled these as does the culinary artist the crab of commerce. He peppered and salted them and then giving for a background a real New Jersey thunderstorm, the concoction was served hot and smoking. Is it any wonder that as Mendelssohn relates, the Liszt audience always stood on the seats to watch him dance through the *Lucia* fantasia? Now every school girl jigs this fatuous stuff before she mounts her bicycle.

And the new critics, who never heard Thalberg, have the impertinence to flout him, to make merry at his fantasias. Just compare the *Don Juan* of Liszt and the *Don Juan* of Thalberg! See which is the more musical, the more pianistic. Liszt, after running through the gamut of operatic extravagance, began to paraphrase movements from Beethoven symphonies, bits of quartets, Wagner overtures and every nondescript thing

he could lay his destructive hands on. How he maltreated the *Tannhäuser* overture we know from Josef Hofmann's recent brilliant but ineffectual playing of it. Wagner, being formless and all orchestral color, loses everything by being transferred to the piano. Then, sighing for fresh fields, the rapacious Magyar seized the tender melodies of Schubert, Schumann, Franz and Brahms and forced them to the block. Need I tell you that their heads were ruthlessly chopped and hacked? A special art-form like the song that needs the co-operation of poetry is robbed of one-half its value in a piano transcription. By this time Liszt had evolved a style of his own, a style of shreds and patches from the raiment of other men. His style, like Joseph's coat of many colors, appealed to pianists because of its factitious brilliancy.

The cement of brilliancy Liszt always contrived to cover his most commonplace compositions with. He wrote etudes *à la* Chopin; clever, I admit, but for my taste his Opus One, which he afterwards dressed up into *Twelve Etudes Transcendentales*—listen to the big, boastful title!—is better than the furbished up later collection. His three concert studies are Chopinish; his *Waldesrauschen* is pretty, but leads nowhere; his *Années des Pélerinage* sickly with

sentimentalism; his *Dante Sonata* a horror; his *B-minor Sonata* a madman's tale signifying froth and fury; his legendes, ballades, sonettes, Benedictions in out of the way places, all, all with choral attachments, are cheap, specious, artificial and insincere. Theatrical Liszt was to a virtue, and his continual worship of God in his music is for me monotonously blasphemous.

The Rhapsodies I reserve for the last. They are the nightmare curse of the pianist, with their rattle-trap harmonies, their helter-skelter melodies, their vulgarity and cheap bohemianism. They all begin in the church and end in the tavern. There is a fad just now for eating ill-cooked food and drinking sour Hungarian wine to the accompaniment of a wretched gypsy circus called a Czardas. Liszt's rhapsodies irresistibly remind me of a cheap, tawdry, dirty *table d'hôte*, where evil-smelling dishes are put before you, to be whisked away and replaced by evil-tasting messes. If Liszt be your god, why then give me Czerny, or, better still, a long walk in the woods, humming with nature's rhythms. I think I'll read *Walden* over again. Now do you think I am as amiable as I look?

X

BACH—ONCE, LAST, AND ALL THE TIME

I'M an old, old man. I've seen the world of sights, and I've listened eagerly, aye, greedily, to the world of sound, to that sweet, maddening concourse of tones civilized Caucasians agree is the one, the only art. I, too, have had my mad days, my days of joys uncontrolled —doesn't Walt Whitman say that somewhere?— I've even rioted in Verdi. Ah, you are surprised! You fancied I knew my Czerny *et voilá tout?* Let me have your ear. I've run the whole gamut of musical composers. I once swore by Meyerbeer. I came near worshiping Wagner, the early Wagner, and today I am willing to acknowledge that *Die Meistersinger* is the very apex of a modern polyphonic score. I adored Spohr and found good in Auber. In a word, I had my little attacks of musical madness, for all the world like measles, scarlet fever, chicken-pox, and the mumps.

As I grew older my task clarified. Having admired Donizetti, there was no danger of being seduced by the boisterous, roystering Mascagni. Knowing Mozart almost by heart, Gounod and his pallid imitations did not for an instant impose on

me. Ah! I knew them all, these vampires who not only absorb a dead man's ideas, but actually copy his style, hoping his interment included his works as well as his mortal remains. Being violently self-conscious, I sought as I passed youth and its dangerous critical heats to analyze just why I preferred one man's music to another's. Why was I attracted to Brahms whilst Wagner left me cold? Why did Schumann not appeal to me as much as Mendelssohn? Why Mozart more than Beethoven? At last, one day, and not many years ago, I cried aloud, "Bach, it is Bach who does it, Bach who animates the wooden, lifeless limbs of these classicists, these modern men. Bach—once, last, and all the time."

And so it came about that with my prying nose I dipped into all composers, and found that the houses they erected were stable in the exact proportion that Bach was used in the foundations. If much Bach, then granted talent, the man reared a solid structure. If no Bach, then no matter how brilliant, how meteoric, how sensational the talents, smash came tumbling down the musical mansion, smash went the fellow's hastily erected palace. Whether it is Perosi—who swears by Bach and doesn't understand or study him—or Mascagni or Massenet, or any of the new school, the result is the same. Bach is

the touchstone. Look at Verdi, the Verdi of *Don Carlo* and the Verdi who planned and built *Falstaff*. Mind you, it is not that big fugued finale—surely one of the most astounding operatic *codas* in existence—that carries me away. It is the general texture of the work, its many voices, like the sweet mingled roar of Buttermilk Falls, that draws me to *Falstaff*. It is because of Bach that I have forsworn my dislike of the later Wagner, and unlearned my disgust at his overpowering sensuousness. The web he spins is too glaring for my taste, but its pattern is so lovely, so admirable, that I have grown very fond of *The Mastersingers*.

Bach is in all great, all good compositions, and especially is he a test for modern piano music. The monophonic has been done to the death by a whole tribe of shallow charlatans, who, under the pretence that they wrote in a true piano style, literally debauched several generations of students. Shall I mention names? Better disturb neither the dead nor the quick. In the matter of writing for more voices than one we have retrograded considerably since the days of Bach. We have, to be sure, built up a more complex harmonic system, beautiful chords have been invented, or rather re-discovered—for in Bach all were latent—but, confound it, children!

these chords are too slow, too ponderous in gait for me. Music is, first of all, motion, after that emotion. I like movement, rhythmical variety, polyphonic life. It is only in a few latter-day composers that I find music that moves, that sings, that thrills.

How did I discover that Bach was in the very heart of Wagner? In the simplest manner. I began playing the *E-flat minor Prelude* in the first book of the *Well-tempered Clavichord*, and lo! I was transported to the opening of *Götterdämmerung*.

Pretty smart boy that Richard Geyer to know his Bach so well! Yet the resemblance is far fetched, is only a hazy similarity. The triad of E-flat minor is common property, but something told me Wagner had been browsing on Bach; on this particular prelude had, in fact, got a starting point for the Norn music. The more I studied Wagner, the more I found Bach, and the more Bach, the better the music. Chopin knew his Bach backwards, hence the surprisingly fresh, vital quality of his music, despite its pessimistic coloring. Schumann loved Bach and built his best music on him, Mendelssohn re-discovered him, whilst Beethoven played the *Well-tempered Clavichord* every day of his life.

All *my* pupils study the *Inventions* before they

play Clementi or Beethoven, and what well-springs of delight are these two- and three-part pieces! Take my word for it, if you have mastered them you may walk boldly up to any of the great, insolent forty-eight sweet-tempered preludes and fugues and overcome them. Study Bach say I to every one, but study him sensibly. Tausig, the greatest pianist the world has yet heard, edited about twenty preludes and fugues from the Clavichord. These he gave his pupils *after* they had played Chopin's opus 10. Strange idea, isn't it? Before that they played the *Inventions*, the symphonies, the *French* and *English Suites*—Klindworth's edition of the latter is excellent—and the *Partitas*. Then, I should say, the Italian concert and that excellent three-voiced fugue in A minor, so seldom heard in concert. It is pleasing rather than deep in feeling, but how effective, how brilliant! Don't forget the toccatas, fantasias, and capriccios. Such works as *The Art of Fugue* and others of the same class show us Father Bach in his working clothes, earnest if not exactly inspired.

But in his moments of inspiration what a genius! What a singularly happy welding of manner and matter! The *Chromatic Fantasia* is to me greater than any of the organ works, with the possible exception of the *G minor*

Fantasia. Indeed, I think it greater than its accompanying *D minor Fugue.* In it are the harmonic, melodic, and spiritual germs of modern music. The restless tonalities, the agitated, passionate, desperate, dramatic recitatives, the emotional curve of the music, are not all these modern, only executed in such a transcendental fashion as to beggar imitation?

Let us turn to the *Well-tempered Clavichord* and bow the knee of submission, of admiration, of worship. I use the Klindworth, the Busoni and sometimes the Bischoff edition, never Kroll, never Czerny. I think it was the latter who once excited my rage when I found the C sharp major prelude transposed to the key of D flat! This outrageous proceeding pales, however, before the infamous behavior of Gounod, who dared—the sacrilegious Gaul!—to place upon the wonderful harmonies of the master of masters a cheap, tawdry, vulgar tune. Gounod deserved oblivion for this. I think I have my favorites, and for a day delude myself that I prefer certain preludes, certain fugues, but a few hours' study of its next-door neighbor and I am intoxicated with *its* beauties. We have all played and loved the *C minor Prelude* in Book one—Cramer made a study on memories of this—and who has not felt happy at its wonderful fugue! Yet a few

pages on is a marvelous *Fugue in C sharp minor* with five voices that slowly crawl to heaven's gate. Jump a little distance and you land in the *E flat Fugue* with its assertiveness, its cocksure subject, and then consider the pattering, gossiping one in E minor. If you are in the mood, has there ever been written a brighter, more amiable, graceful prelude than the eleventh in F? Its germ is perhaps the *F major Invention*, the eighth. A marked favorite of mine is the fifteenth fugue in G. There's a subject for you and what a jolly length!

Bach could spin music as a spider spins its nest, from earth to the sky and back again. Did you ever hear Rubinstein play the *B-flat Prelude and Fugue?* If you have not, count something missed in your life. He made the prelude as light as a moonbeam, but there was thunder in the air, the clouds floated away, airy nothings in the blue, and then celestial silence. Has any modern composer written music in which is packed as much meaning, as much sorrow as may be found in the *B-flat minor Prelude?* It is the matrix of all modern musical emotion.

I don't know why I persist in saying "modern," as if there is any particular feeling, emotion, or sensation discovered and exploited by the man of this time that men of other ages did not ex-

perience! But before Bach I knew no one who ranged the keyboard of the emotions so freely, so profoundly, so poignantly.

Touching on his technics, I may say that they require of the pianist's fingers individualization and, consequently, a flexibility that is spiritual as well as material. The diligent daily study of Bach will form your style, your technics, better than all machines and finger exercises. But play him as if he were human, a contemporary and not a historical reminiscence. Yes, you may indulge in *rubato*. I would rather hear it in Bach than in Chopin. Play Bach as if he still composed —he does—and drop the nonsense about traditional methods of performance. He would alter all that if he were alive today.

I know but one Bach anecdote, and that I have never seen in print. The story was related to me by a pupil of Reinecke, and Reinecke got it from Mendelssohn. Bach, so it appears, was in the habit of practising every day in the Thomas-Kirche at Leipsic, and one day several of his sons, headed by the naughty Friedmann, resolved to play a joke on their good old father. Accordingly, they repaired to the choir loft, got the bellows-blower away, and started in to give the Master a surprise. They tied the handle of the bellows to the door of the choir, and with a long

rope fastened to the outside knob they pulled the door open and shut, and of course the wind ran low. Johann Sebastian—who looked more like E. M. Bowman than E. M. B. himself—suddenly found himself clawing ivory. He rose and went softly to the rear. Discovering no blower, he investigated, and began to gently haul in the line. When it was all in several boys were at the end of it. Did he whip them? Not he. He locked the door, tied them to the bellows and sternly bade them blow. They did. Then the archangel of music went back to his bench and composed the famous *Wedge* fugue. How true all this is I know not, but anyhow it is quaint enough. Let me end this exhortation by quoting some words of Eduard Remenyi from his fantastic essay on Bach: "If you want music for your own and music's sake—look up to Bach. If you want music which is as absolutely full of meaning as an egg is full of meat—look up to Bach."

Look up to Bach. Sound advice. Profit by it.

XI

SCHUMANN: A VANISHING STAR

THE missing meteors of November minded me of the musical reputations I have seen rise, fill mid-heaven with splendor, pale, and fade into ineffectual twilight. Alas! it is one of the bitter things of old age, one of its keen tortures, to listen to young people, to hear their superb boastings, and to know how short-lived is all art, music the most evanescent of them all. When I was a boy the star of Schumann was just on the rim of the horizon; what glory! what a planet swimming freely into the glorious constellation! Beethoven was clean obscured by the romantic mists that went to our heads like strong, new wine, and made us drunk with joy. How neat, dapper, respectable and antique Mendelssohn! Being Teutonic in our learnings, Chopin seemed French and dandified—the Slavic side of him was not yet in evidence to our unanointed vision. Schubert was a divinely awkward stammerer, and Liszt the brilliant centipede amongst virtuosi. They were rapturous days and we fed full upon Jean Paul Richter, Hoffmann, moonshine and mush.

What the lads and lassies of ideal predilections

needed was a man like Schumann, a dreamer of dreams, yet one who pinned illuminative tags to his visions to give them symbolical meanings, dragged in poetry by the hair, and called the composite, art. Schumann, born mentally sick, a man with the germs of insanity, a pathological case, a literary man turned composer—Schumann, I say, topsy-turvied all the newly born and, without knowing it, diverted for the time music from its true current. He preached Brahms and Chopin, but practised Wagner—he was the forerunner to Wagner, for he was the first composer who fashioned literature into tone.

Doesn't all this sound revolutionary? An old fellow like me talking this way, finding old-fashioned what he once saw leave the bank of melody with the mintage glitteringly fresh! Yet it is so. I have lived to witness the rise of Schumann and, please Apollo, I shall live to see the eclipse of Wagner. Can't you read the handwriting on the wall? *Dinna ye hear the slogan* of the realists? No music rooted in bookish ideas, in literary or artistic movements, will survive the mutations of the *Zeitgeist*. Schumann reared his palace on a mirage. The inside he called Bachian—but it wasn't. In variety of key-color perhaps; but structurally no symphony may be built on Bach, for a sufficient

reason. Schumann had the great structure models before him; he heeded them not. He did not pattern after the three master-architects, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven; gave no time to line, fascinated as he was by the problems of color. But color fades. Where are the Turners of yester-year? Form and form only endures, and so it has come to pass that of his four symphonies, not one is called great in the land where he was king for a day. The B-flat is a pretty suite, the C-major inutile—always barring the lyric episodes—the D-minor a thing of shreds and patches, and the *Rhenish*—muddy as the river Rhine in winter time.

The *E-flat piano Quintet* will live and also the piano concerto—originally a fantasia in one movement. Thus Schumann experimented and built, following the line of easiest resistance, which is the poetic idea. If he had patterned as has Brahms, he would have sternly put aside his childish romanticism, left its unwholesome if captivating shadows, and pushed bravely into the open, where the sun and moon shine without the blur and miasma of a *decadent* literature. But then we should not have had Schumann. It was not to be, and thus it is that his is a name with a musical sigh, a name that evokes charming memories, and also, I must admit, a name that

gently plucks at one's heart-strings. His songs are sweet, yet never so spontaneous as Schubert's, so astringently intellectual as Robert Franz's. His opera, his string quartets—how far are the latter from the noble, self-contained music in this form of Beethoven and Brahms!—and his choral compositions are already in the sad, gray *penumbra* of the negligible. His piano music is without the clear, chiseled contours of Chopin, without a definite, a great style, yet—the piano music of Schumann, how lovely some of it is!

I will stop my heartless heart-to-heart talk. It is too depressing, these vagaries, these senile ramblings of a superannuated musician. Ah, me! I too was once in Arcady, where the shepherds bravely piped original and penetrating tunes, where the little shepherdesses danced to their lords and smiled sweet porcelain smiles. It was all very real, this music of the middle century, and it was written for the time, it suited the time, and when the time passed, the music with the men grew stale, sour, and something to be avoided, like the leer of a creaking, senescent *beau*, like the rouge and grimace of a debile *coquette*. My advice then is, enjoy the music of your epoch, for there is no such thing as music of the future. It is always music of the present. Schumann has had his day, Wagner is having

his, and Brahms will be ruler of all tomorrow. *Eheu Fugaces!*

There was a time, *mes enfants*, when I played at all the Schumann piano music. The *Abegg* variations, the *Papillons*, the *Intermezzi*—"an extension of the *Papillons*," said Schumann—*Die Davidsbündler*, that wonderful *toccata in C*, the best double-note study in existence—because it is music first, technics afterward—the seldom attempted *Allegro*, *opus 8*, the *Carnaval*, tender and dazzling miniatures, the twelve settings of Paganini, much more musical than Liszt's, the *Impromptus*, a delicate compliment to his Clara. It is always Clara with this Robert, like that other Robert, the strong-souled English husband of Elizabeth Browning. Schumann's whole life romance centered in his wife. A man in love with his wife and that man a musician! Why, the entire episode must seem abnormal to the flighty, capricious younger set, the Bayreuth set, for example. But it was an ideal union, the woman a sympathetic artist, the composer writing for her, writing songs, piano music, even criticism for and about her. Decidedly one of the prettiest and most wholesome pictures in the history of any art.

Then I attacked the *F-sharp Minor Sonata*, with its wondrous introduction like the vast,

somber portals to some fantastic Gothic pile. The *Fantasiestücke opus 12*, still remain Schumann at his happiest, and easiest comprehended. The *Symphonic Variations* are the greatest of all, greater than the *Concerto* or the *Fantasie in C*. These almost persuade one that their author is a fit companion for Beethoven and Chopin. There is invention, workmanship, and a solidity that never for a moment clashes with the tide of romantic passion surging beneath. Here he strikes fire and the blaze is glorious.

The *F-minor Sonata*—the so-called *Concert sans orchestre*—a truncated, unequal though interesting work; the *Arabesque*, the *Blumenstück*, the marvelous and too seldom played *Humoreske*, opus 20, every one throbbing with feeling; the eight *Novelletten*, almost, but not quite successful attempts at a new form; the genial but unsatisfactory *G-minor Sonata*, the *Nachtstücke*, and the *Vienna Carnaval*, opus 26, are not all of these the unpremeditated outpourings of a genuine poet, a poet of sensibility, of exquisite feeling?

I must not forget those idylls of childhood, the *Kinderscenen*, the half-crazy *Kreisleriana*, true soul-states, nor the *Fantasie, opus 17*, which lacks a movement to make it an organic whole. Consider the little pieces, like the three romances,

opus 28, the opus 32, the *Album for the Young, opus 68*, the four fugues, four marches, the *Waldscenen*—Oh, never-to-be-forgotten *Vogel als Prophet* and *Trock'ne Blumen*—the *Concertstück, opus 92*, the second *Album for the Young*, the *Three Fantasy Pieces, opus 111*, the *Bunte Blätter*—do you recall the one in F-sharp minor so miraculously varied by Brahms, or that appealing one in A-flat? The *Albumblätter, opus 124*, the seven pieces in fughetta form, the never-played *Concert allegro in D-minor, opus 134*, or the two posthumous works, the *Scherzo* and the *Presto Passionata.*

Have I forgotten any? No doubt. I am growing weary, weary of all this music, opiate music, prismatic music, "dreary music"—as Schumann himself called his early stuff—and the somber peristaltic music of his "lonesome, latter years." Schumann is now for the very young, for the self-illuded. We care more—being sturdy realists—for architecture today. These crepuscular visions, these adventures of the timid soul on sad white nights, these soft croonings of love and sentiment are out of joint with the days of electricity and the worship of the golden calf. Do not ask yourself with cynical airs if Schumann is not, after all, second-rate, but rather, when you are in the mood, enter his house

of dreams, his home beautiful, and rest your nerves. Robert Schumann may not sip ambrosial nectar with the gods in highest Valhall, but he served his generation; above all, he made happy one noble woman. When his music is shelved and forgotten, the name of the Schumanns will stand for that rarest of blessings, conjugal felicity.

XII

"WHEN I PLAYED FOR LISZT"

TO write from Bayreuth in the spring-time as Wagner sleeps calmly in the backyard of *Wahnfried*, without a hint of his music in the air, is giving me one of the deepest satisfactions of my existence. How came you in Bayreuth, and, of all seasons in the year, the spring? The answer may astonish you; indeed, I am astonished myself when I think of it. Liszt, Franz Liszt, greatest of pianists—after Thalberg—greatest of modern composers—after no one—Liszt lies out here in the cemetery on the Erlangerstrasse, and to visit that forlorn pagoda designed by his grandson Siegfried Wagner, I left my comfortable lodgings in Munich and traveled an entire day.

Now let me whisper something in your ear—I once studied with Liszt at Weimar! Does this seem incredible to you? An adorer of Thalberg, nevertheless, once upon a time I pulled up stakes at Paris and went to the abode of Liszt and played for him exactly once. This was a half-century ago. I carried letters from a well-known Parisian music publisher, Liszt's

own, and was therefore accorded a hearing. Well do I recall the day, a bright one in April. His Serene Highness was at that time living on the Altenberg, and to see him I was forced to as much patience and diplomacy as would have gained me admittance to a royal household.

Endlich, the fatal moment arrived. Surrounded by a band of disciples, crazy fellows all —I discovered among the rest the little figure of Karl Tausig—the great man entered the *saal* where I tremblingly sat. He was very amiable. He read the letters I timidly presented him, and then, slapping me on the back with an expression of *bonhomie*, he cried aloud in French: "*Tiens!* let us hear what this admirer of my old friend Thalberg has to say for himself on the keyboard!" I did not miss the veiled irony of the speech, the word *friend* being ever so lightly underlined; I knew of the famous Liszt-Thalberg *duello*, during which so much music and ink had been spilt.

But my agony! The *via dolorosa* I traversed from my chair to the piano! Since then the modern school of painter-impressionists has come into fashion. I understand perfectly the mental, may I say the optical, attitude of these artists to landscape subjects. They must gaze upon a tree, a house, a cow, with their nerves at highest tension until everything quivers; the sky is

bathed in magnetic rays, the background trembles as it does in life. So to me was the lofty chamber wherein I stood on that fateful afternoon. Liszt, with his powerful profile, the profile of an Indian chieftain, lounged in the window embrasure, the light streaking his hair, gray and brown, and silhouetting his brow, nose, and projecting chin. He alone was the illuminated focus of this picture which, after a half-century, is brilliantly burnt into my memory. His pupils were mere wraiths floating in a misty dream, with malicious white points of light for eyes. And I felt like a disembodied being in this spectral atmosphere.

Yet urged by an hypnotic will I went to the piano, lifted the fall-board, and in my misery I actually paused to read the maker's name. A whisper, a smothered chuckle, and a voice uttering these words: "He must have begun as a piano-salesman," further disconcerted me. I fell on to the seat and dropped my fingers upon the keys. Facing me was the Ary Scheffer portrait of Chopin, and without knowing why I began the weaving Prelude in D-major. My insides shook like a bowl of jelly; yet I was outwardly as calm as the growing grass. My hands did not falter and the music seemed to ooze from my wrists. I had not studied in vain

Thalberg's *Art of Singing on the Piano.* I finished. There was a murmur; nothing more.

Then Liszt's voice cut the air:

"I expected Thalberg's tremolo study," he said. I took the hint and arose.

He permitted me to kiss his hand, and, without stopping for my hat and walking-stick in the antechamber, I went away to my lodgings. Later I sent a servant for the forgotten articles, and the evening saw me in a diligence miles from Weimar. But I had played for Liszt!

Now, the moral of all this is that my testimony furthermore adds to the growing mystery of Franz Liszt. He heard hundreds of such pianists of my caliber, and, while he never committed himself—for he was usually too kind-hearted to wound mediocrity with cruel criticism, yet he seldom spoke the unique word except to such men as Rubinstein, Tausig, Joseffy, d'Albert, Rosenthal, or von Bülow. A miraculous sort of a man, Liszt was ever pouring himself out upon the world, body, soul, brains, art, purse—all were at the service of his fellow-beings. That he was imposed upon is a matter of course; that he never did an unkind act in his life proves him to have been Cardinal Newman's definition of a gentleman: "One who never inflicts pain." And only now is the real significance of the man

as a composer beginning to be revealed. Like a comet he swept the heavens of his early youth. He was a marvelous virtuoso who mistook the piano for an orchestra and often confounded the orchestra with the piano. As a pianist pure and simple I prefer Sigismund Thalberg; but, as a composer, as a man, an extraordinary personality, Liszt quite filled my firmament.

Setting aside those operatic arrangements and those clever, noisy Hungarian Rhapsodies, what a wealth of piano-music has not this man disclosed to us. Calmly read the thematic catalog of Breitkopf and Härtel and you will be amazed at its variety. Liszt has paraphrased inimitably songs by Schubert, Schumann, and Robert Franz, in which the perfumed flower of the composer's thoughts is never smothered by passage-work. Consider the delicious etude *Au bord d'une Source*, or the *Sonnets After Petrarch*, or those beautiful concert-studies in D-flat, F-minor, and A-flat; are they not models of genuine piano-music! The settings of Schubert marches Hanslick declared are marvels; and the *Transcendental Studies!* Are not keyboard limitations compassed? Chopin, a sick man physically, never dared as did Liszt. One was an æolian-harp, the other a hurricane. I never attempted to play these studies in their revised form; I

content myself with the first sketches published as an opus 1. There the nucleus of each etude may be seen. Later Liszt expanded the *croquis* into elaborate frescoes. And yet they say that he had no thematic invention!

Take up his B-minor sonata. Despite its length, an unheavenly length, it is one of the great works of piano-literature fit to rank with Beethoven's most sublime sonatas. It is epical. Have you heard Friedheim or Burmeister play it? I had hoped that Liszt would vouchsafe me a performance, but you have seen that I had not the courage to return to him. Besides, I wasn't invited. Once in Paris a Liszt pupil, George Leitert, played for me the *Dante Sonata*, a composition I heard thirty years later from the fingers of Arthur Friedheim. It is the *Divine Comedy* compressed within the limits of a piano-piece. What folly, I hear some one say! Not at all. In several of Chopin's Preludes—his supreme music—I have caught reflections of the sun, the moon, and the starry beams that one glimpses in lonely midnight pools. If Chopin could mirror the cosmos in twenty bars, why should not a greater tone-poet imprison behind the bars of his music the subtle soul of Dante?

To view the range, the universality of Liszt's genius, it is only necessary to play such a tiny

piano-composition, *Eclogue*, from *Les Années de Pelérinage* and then hear his *Faust Symphony*, his *Dante Symphony*, his Symphonic Poems. There's a man for you! as Abraham Lincoln once said of Walt Whitman. After carefully listening to the *Faust Symphony* it dawns on you that you have heard all this music elsewhere, filed out, triturated, cut into handy, digestible fragments; in a word, dressed up for operatic consumption, popularized. Yes, Richard Wagner dipped his greedy fingers into Liszt's scores as well as into his purse. He borrowed from the pure Rhine-gold hoard of the Hungarian's genius, and forgot to credit the original. In music there are no quotation marks. That is the reason borrowing has been in vogue from Handel down.

The *Ring of the Nibelungs* would not be heard today if Liszt had not written its theme in his *Faust Symphony*. *Parsifal* is altogether Lisztian, and a German writer on musical esthetics has pointed out recently, theme for theme, resemblance for resemblance, in this Liszt-Wagner *Verhältniss*. Wagner owed everything to Liszt—from money to his wife, success, and art. A wonderful white soul was Franz Liszt. And he is only coming into his kingdom as a composer. Poor, petty, narrow-minded humanity could not realize that because a man was a pianist among

pianists, he might be a composer among composers. I made the error myself. I, too, thought that the velvet touch of Thalberg was more admirable than the mailed warrior fist of Liszt. It is a mistake. And now, plumped on my knees in Liszt's Bayreuth tomb, I acknowledge my faults. Yes, he was a greater pianist than Thalberg. Can an old-fashioned fellow say more?

XIII

WAGNER OPERA IN NEW YORK

WITH genuine joy I sit once more in my old arm-chair and watch the brawling Wissahickon Creek, its banks draped with snow, while overhead the sky seems so friendly and blue. I am at Dussek Villa, I am at home; and I reproach myself for having been such a fool as ever to wander from it. Being a fussy but conscientious old bachelor, I scold myself when I am in the wrong, thus making up for the clattering tongue of an active wife. As I once related to you, I recently went to New York, and there encountered sundry adventures, not all of them of a diverting nature. One you know, and it reeks in my memory with stale cigars, witless talk, and all the other monotonous symbols of Bohemia. Ah, that blessed Bohemia, whose coast no man ever explored except gentle Will Shakespeare! It is no-man's-land; never was and never will be. Its misty, alluring signals have shipwrecked many an artistic mariner, and—but pshaw! I'm too old to moralize this way. Only young people moralize. It is their prerogative. When they live, when they fathom good and evil and their mysteries, charity will

check their tongues, so I shall say no more of Bohemia. What I saw of it further convinced me of its undesirability, of its inutility.

And now to my tale, now to finish forever the story of my experiences in Gotham! I declaimed violently against Tchaikovsky to my acquaintances of the hour, because my dislike to him is deep rooted; but I had still to encounter another modern musician, who sent me home with a headache, with nerves all jangling, a stomach soured, and my whole esthetic system topsy-turveyed and sorely wrenched. I heard for the first time Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre*, and I've been sick ever since.

I felt, with Louis Ehlert, that another such a performance would release my feeble spirit from its fleshly vestment and send it soaring to the angels, for surely all my sins would be wiped out, expiated, by the severe penance endured.

Not feeling quite myself the day after my experiences with the music journalists, I strolled up Broadway, and, passing the opera-house, inspected the *menu* for the evening. I read, "*Die Walküre*, with a grand cast," and I fell to wondering what the word *Walküre* meant. I have an old-fashioned acquaintance with German, but never read a line or heard a word of Wagner's. Oh, yes; I forget the overture to

Rienzi, which always struck me as noisy and quite in Meyerbeer's most vicious manner. But the Richard Wagner, the later Wagner, I read so much about in the newspapers, I knew nothing of. I do now. I wish I didn't.

Says I to myself, "Here's a chance to hear this Walkover opera. So now or never." I went in, and, planking my dollar down, I said, "Give me the best seat you have." "Other box-office, on 40th Street, please, for gallery." I was taken aback. "What!" I exclaimed, "do you ask a whole dollar for a gallery seat? How much, pray, for one down-stairs?" The young man looked at me curiously, but politely replied, "Five dollars, and they are all sold out." I went outside and took off my hat to cool my head. Five good dollars—a whole week's living and more—to listen to a Wagner opera! Whew! It must be mighty good music. Why I never paid more than twenty-five cents to hear Mozart's *Magic Flute*, and with Carlotta, Patti, Karl Formes, and—but what's the use of reminiscences?

I could not make up my mind to spend so much money and I walked to Central Park, took several turns, and then came down town again. My mind was made up. I went boldly to the box-office and encountered the same young man.

"Look here, my friend," I said, "I didn't ask you for a private box, but just a plain seat, one seat." "Sold out," he laconically replied and retired. Then I heard suspicious laughter. Rather dazed, I walked slowly to the sidewalk and was grabbed—there is no other word—by several rough men with tickets and big bunches of greenbacks in their grimy fists. "Tickets, tickets, fine seats for *De Volkyure* tonight." They yelled at me and I felt as if I were in the clutches of the "barkers" of a down-town clothing-house. I saw my chance and began dickering. At first I was asked fifteen dollars a seat, but seeing that I am apoplectic by temperament they came down to ten. I asked why this enormous tariff and was told that Van Dyck, Eames, Nordica, Van Rooy, and heaven knows who besides, were in the cast. That settled it. I bargained and wrangled and finally escaped with a seat in the orchestra for seven dollars! Later I discovered it was not only in the orchestra, but quite near the orchestra, and on the brass and big drum side.

When I reached the opera-house after my plain supper of ham and eggs and tea it must have been seven o'clock. I was told to be early and I was. No one else was except the ticket speculators, who, recognizing me, gave me another hard fight

until I finally called a policeman. He smiled and told me to walk around the block until half-past seven, when the doors opened. But I was too smart and found my way back and everything open at 7.15, and my seat occupied by an overcoat. I threw it into the orchestra and later there was a fine row when the owner returned. I tried to explain, but the man was mad, and I advised him to go to his last home. Why even the ushers laughed. At 7.45 there were a few dressed up folks down stairs, and they mostly stared at me, for I kept my fur cap on to heat my head, and my suit, the best one I have, is a good, solid pepper-and-salt one. I didn't mind it in the least, but what worried me was the libretto which I tried to glance through before the curtain rose. In vain. The story would not come clear, although I saw I was in trouble when I read that the hero and heroine were brother and sister. Experience has taught me that family rows are the worst, and I wondered why Wagner chose such a dull, old-fashioned theme.

The orchestra began to fill up and there was much chattering and noise. Then a little fellow with beard and eyeglasses hopped into the conductor's chair, the lights were turned off, and with a roar like a storm the overture began. I tried to feel thrilled, but couldn't. I had expected

a new art, a new orchestration, but here I was on familiar ground, so familiar that presently I found myself wondering why Wagner had orchestrated the beginning of Schubert's *Erlking*. The noise began in earnest and by the light from a player's lamp I saw that the prelude was intended for a storm. "Ha!" I said, "then it was the *Erlking* after all." The curtain rose on an empty stage with a big tree in the middle and a fire burning on the hearth.

There was no pause in the music at the end of the overture—did it really end?—which I thought funny. Then a man with big whiskers, wearing the skin of an animal, staggered in and fell before the fire. He seemed tired out and the music had a tired feeling too. A woman dressed in white entered and after staring for twenty bars got him a drink in a ram's horn. The music kept right on as if it were a symphony and not an opera. The yelling from the pair was awful, at least so it seemed to me. It appears that they were having family troubles and didn't know their own names. Then the orchestra began stamping and knocking, and a fellow with hawk wings in his helmet, a spear and a beard entered, and some one next to me said "There's the Hunding motive." Now I know my German, but I saw no dog, besides, what motive could the

animal have had. The three people, a savage crew, sat down and talked to music, just plain talk, for I didn't hear a solitary tune. The girl went to bed and the man followed. The tenor had a long scene alone and the girl came back. They must have found out their names, for they embraced and after pulling an old sword out of the tree, they said a lot and went away. I was glad they had patched up the family trouble, but what became of the big, black-bearded fellow with the hawk wings in his helmet?

The next act upset me terribly. I read my book, but cou'dn't make out why, if *Wotan* was the God of all and high much-a-muck, he didn't smash all his enemies, especially that cranky old woman of his, *Fricka?* What a pretty name! I got quite excited when Nordica sang a yelling sort of a scream high up on the rocks. Not at the music, however, but I expected her to fall over and break her neck. She didn't, and shouting Wagner's music at that. Why it would twist the neck of a giraffe! Quite at sea, I saw the brother and sister come in and violently quarrel, and Nordica return and sing a slumber song, for the sister slept and the brother looked cross. Then more gloom and a duel up in the clouds, and once more the curtain fell. I heard the celebrated *Ride of the Valkyries* and wondered if it was music or

just a stable full of crazy colts neighing for oats. Dean Swift's Gulliver would have said the latter. I thought so. The howling of the circus girls up on the rocks paralyzed my faculties.

It was a hideous saturnalia, and deafened by the brass and percussion instruments I tried to get away, but my neighbors protested and I was forced to sit and suffer. What followed was incomprehensible. The crazy amazons, the Walk-your-horses, and the disagreeable *Wotan* kept things in a perfect uproar for half an hour. Then the stage cleared and the father, after lecturing his daughter, put her to sleep under a tree. He must have been a mesmerist. Red fire ran over the stage, steam hissed, the orchestra rattled, and the bass roared. Finally, to tinkling bells and fourth of July fireworks, the curtain fell on the silliest pantomime I ever saw.

The music? Ah, don't ask me now! Wait until my nerves get settled. It never stopped, and fast as it reeled off I recognized Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Weber—lots of Weber—Marschner, and Chopin. Yes, Chopin! The orchestration seemed overwrought and coarse and the form—well, formlessness is the only word to describe it. There was an infernal sort of skill in the instrumentation at times, a short-breathed juggling with other men's

ideas, but no development, no final cadence. Everything in suspension until my ears fairly longed for one perfect resolution. Even in the *Spring Song* it does not occur. That tune is suspiciously Italian, for all Wagner's dislike of Italy.

And this is your operatic hero today! This is your maker of music dramas! Pooh! it is neither fish nor flesh nor good red herring. Give me one page from the *Marriage of Figaro* or the finale to *Don Giovanni* and I will show you divine melody and great dramatic writing! But I'm old-fashioned, I suppose. I have since been told the real story of *Die Walküre* and am dumfounded. It is all worse than I expected. Give me my Dussek, give me Mozart, let me breathe pure, sweet air after this hot-house music with its debauch of color, sound, action, and morals. I must have the grip, because even now as I write my mind seems tainted with the awful music of Richard Wagner, the arch fiend of music. I shall send for the doctor in the morning.

XIV

A VISIT TO THE PARIS CONSERVATOIRE

I FEEL very much like the tutor of Prince Karl Heinrich in the pretty play *Old Heidelberg*. After a long absence he returned to Heidelberg where his student life had been happy—or at least had seemed so to him in the latter, lonesome years. Behold, he found the same reckless crowd, swaggering, carousing, flirting, dueling, debt-making, love-making, and occasionally studying. He liked it so well that, if I mistake not, the place killed him. I felt very much in the same position as the Doctor Jüttner of the play when I returned to Paris last summer. The *Conservatoire* is still in its old, crooked, narrow street; it is still a noisy sheol as one enters at the gate; and there is still the same old gang of callow youths and extremely pert misses going and coming. Only they all seem more sophisticated nowadays. They—naturally enough—know more than their daddies, and they show it. As they brushed past, literally elbowing me, they seemed contemptuously arrogant in their youthful exuberance. And yet, and yet—*ego in Arcadia!*

A VISIT TO THE PARIS CONSERVATOIRE

I stood in the quadrangle and dreamed. Forty years ago—or is it fifty?—I had stood there before; but it was in the chilly month of November. I was young then, and I was very ambitious. The little Ohio town whose obscurity I had hoped to transform into fame—ah! these mad dreams of egotistical boyhood—did not resent my leaving it. It still stands where it was—stands still. I seem to have gone on, and yet I return to that little, dull, dilapidated town in my thoughts, for it was there I enjoyed the purple visions of music, where I fondly believed that I, too, might go forth into the world and make harmony. I did; but my harmony exercises were always returned full of blue marks. Such is life—and its lead-pencil ironies!

To be precise as well as concise, I stood in the concierge's bureau some forty years ago and wondered if the secretary would see me. He did. After he had tortured me as to my age, parentage, nationality, qualifications, even personal habits, it occurred to him to ask me what I wanted in Paris. I told him, readily enough, that I had crossed the yeasty Atlantic in a sailing vessel—for motives of economy—that I might study the pianoforte in Paris. I remember that I also naïvely inquired the hours when M. François Liszt—he called him *Litz!*—gave his lessons.

The secretary was too polite to laugh at my provincial ignorance, but he coughed violently several times. Then I was informed that M. Liszt never gave piano-lessons any time, anywhere; that he was to be found in Weimar; but only by passed grand masters of the art of pianoforte-playing. Still undaunted, I insisted on entering my name amongst those who would compete at the forthcoming public examination. I was, as I said before, very young, very inexperienced, and I was alone, with just enough money to keep me for one year.

I lived in a fourth-story garret in a little alley—you couldn't call it a street—just off the exterior boulevard. Whether it was the Clichy or the Batignolles doesn't matter very much now. How I lived was another affair—and also an object lesson for the young fellows who go abroad nowadays equipped with money, with clothes, with everything except humility. Judging from my weekly expenses in my native town, I supposed that Paris could not be very much higher in its living. So I took with me $600 in gold, which, partially an inheritance, partially saved and borrowed, was to last me two years. How I expected to get home was one of those things that I dared not reflect upon. Sufficient for the day are the finger exercises thereof! I paid $8 a month—

about 40 francs—for my lodgings. Heavens—what a room! It was so small that I undressed and dressed in the hall, always dark, for the reason that my bed, bureau, trunk, and upright piano quite crowded me out of the apartment. I could lie in bed and by reaching out my hands touch the keyboard of the little rattletrap of an instrument. But it was a piano, after all, and at it I could weave my musical dreams.

I forgot to tell you that my eating and drinking did not cut important figures in my scheme of living. I had made up my mind early in my career that tobacco and beer were for millionaires. Coffee was the grand consoler, and with coffee, soup, bread, I managed to get through my work. I ate at a café frequented by cabmen, and for ten cents I was given soup, the meat of the soup—tasteless stuff—bread, and a potato. What more did an ambitious young man want? There were many not so well off as I. I took two meals a day, the first, coffee and milk with a roll. Then I starved until dark for my soup meat. I recall wintry days when I stayed in bed to keep warm, for I never could indulge in the luxury of fire, and with a pillow on my stomach I did my harmony lessons. The pillow, need I add, was to suppress the latent pangs of juvenile

appetite. My one sorrow was my washing. With my means, fresh linen was out of the question. A flannel shirt, one; socks at intervals, and a silk handkerchief, my sole luxury, was the full extent of my wardrobe.

When the wet rain splashed my face as I walked the boulevards on the morning of the examination I was not cast down. I had determined to do or die. With a hundred of my sort, both sexes and varying nationality, I was penned up in a room, one door of which opened on the stage of the Conservatory theater. I looked about me. Giggling girls in crumpled white dresses stalked up and down humming their arias, while shabbily dressed mothers gazed admiringly at them. Big boys and little, bad boys and good, slim, fat, stupid, shrewd boys, encircled me, and, as I was mature for my age, joked me about my senile appearance. I had a numbered card in my hand, No. 13, and all those who saw it shuddered, for the French are as stupid as old-time Southern "darkies." Something akin to the expectant feeling of the early Christian martyrs was experienced by all of us as a number was called aloud by a hoarse-voiced Cerberus, and the victim disappeared through the narrow door leading to the lions in the arena. At last, after some squabbling between No. 14 and No. 15, both of

whom thought they had precedence over No. 13, I went forth to my fate.

I came out upon a dimly lighted stage which held two grand pianofortes and several chairs. A colorless-looking individual read my card and with marked asperity asked for my music. Frightened, I told him I had brought none. There were murmurings and suppressed laughter in the dim auditorium. *There* sat the judges—I don't know how many, but one was a woman, and I hated her though I could not see her. She had a disagreeable laugh, and she let it loose when the assistant professor on the platform stumbled over the syllables of my very Teutonic name. I explained that I had memorized a Beethoven sonata, all the Beethoven sonatas, and that was the reason I left my music at home. This explanation was received in chilly silence, though I did not fail to note that it prejudiced the interrogating professor against me. He evidently took me for a superior person, and he then and there mentally proposed to set me down several pegs. I felt, rather than saw, all this in the twinkling of an eye. I sat down to the keyboard and launched forth into Beethoven's first *Sonata in F minor*, a favorite of mine. Ominous silence broken by the tapping of a nervous lead pencil in the hand of a nervous woman. I got through the

movement and then a voice punctuated the stillness.

"Ah, Mozart is *so* easy! Try something else!" And then I made my second mistake. I arose and, bowing to the invisible one in the gloom, I said: "That was *not* Mozart, but Beethoven." There was an explosion of laughter, formidable, brutal. The feminine voice rose above it all in irritating accents.

"Impertinent! And what a silly beard he has!" I sat down in despair, plucking at my fluffy chin-whiskers and wondering if they looked as frivolous as they felt.

Nudged from dismal reverie, I saw the colorless professor with a music book in his hand. He placed it on the piano-desk and mumbled: "Very indifferent. Read this at sight." Puzzled by the miserable light, the still more wretched typography, I peered at the notes as peers a miser at the gold he is soon to lose. No avail. My vision was blurred, my fingers leaden. Suddenly I noticed that, whether through malicious intent or stupid carelessness, the book was upside down. Now, I knew my Bach fugues, if I may say it, backward. Something familiar about the musical text told me that before me, inverted, was the *C-sharp Major Prelude* in the first book of the *Well-tempered Clavichord.*

Mechanically my fingers began that most delicious and light-hearted of caprices—I did not dare to touch the music—and soon I was rattling through it, all my thoughts three thousand miles away in a little Ohio town. When I had finished I arose in grim silence, took the music, held it toward the chief executioner, and said:

"And upside down!"

There was another outburst, and again that woman's voice was heard:

"What a comedian is this young Yankee!"

I left the stage without bowing, jostled the stupid doorkeeper, and fled through the room where the other numbers huddled like sheep for the slaughter. Seizing my hat I went out into the rain, and when the concierge tried to stop me I shook a threatening fist at him. He stepped back in a fine hurry, I assure you. When I came to my senses I found myself on my bed, my head buried in the pillows. Luckily I had no mirror, so I was spared the sight of my red, mortified face. That night I slept as if drugged.

In the morning a huge envelope with an official seal was thrust through a crack in my door—there were many—and in it I found a notification that I was accepted as a pupil of the Paris *Conservatoire*. What a dream realized! But only to be shattered, for, so I was

further informed, I had succeeded in one test and failed in another—my sight reading was not up to the high standard demanded. No wonder! Music reversed, and my fingers mechanically playing could be hardly called a fair sight-reading trial. Therefore, continued this implacable document, I would sit for a year in silence watching other pupils receiving their instruction. I was to be an *auditeur*, a listener —and all my musical castles came tumbling about my ears!

What I did during that weary year of waiting cannot be told in one article; suffice it to say I sat, I heard, I suffered. If music-students of today experience kindred trials I pity them; but somehow or other I fancy they do not. Luxury is longed for too much; young men and young women will not make the sacrifices for art we oldsters did; and it all shows in the shallow, superficial, showy, empty, insincere pianoforte-playing of the day and hour.

XV

TONE VERSUS NOISE

THE tropical weather in the early part of last month set a dozen problems whizzing in my skull. Near my bungalow on the upper Wissahickon were several young men, camping out for the summer. One afternoon I was playing with great gusto a lovely sonata by Dussek—the one in A-flat—when I heard laughter, and, rising, I went to the window in an angry mood. Outside were two smiling faces, the patronizing faces of two young men.

"Well!" said I, rather shortly.

"It was like a whiff from the eighteenth century," said a stout, dark young fellow.

"A whiff that would dissipate the musical malaria of this," I cried, for I saw I had musicians to deal with. There was hearty laughter at this, and as young laughter warms the cockles of an old man's heart, I invited the pair indoors, and over some bottled ale—I despise your new-fangled slops—we discussed the Fine Arts. It is not the custom nowadays to capitalize the arts, and to me it reveals the want of respect in this headlong irreverent generation. To return to

my mutton—to my sheep: they told me they were pianists from New York or thereabouts, who had conceived the notion of spending the summer in a tent.

"And what of your practising?" I slyly asked. Again they roared. "Why, old boy, you must be behind the times. We use a dumb piano the most part of the year, and have brought a three-octave one along." That set me going. "So you spend your vacation with the dumb, expecting to learn to speak, and yet you mock me because I play Dussek! Let me inform you, my young sirs, that this quaint, old-fashioned music, with its faint odor of the *rococo*, is of more satisfying musical value than all your modern gymnasiums. Of what use, pray, is your superabundant technics if you can't make music? Training your muscles and memorizing, you say? Fiddlesticks! The *Well-tempered Clavichord* for one hour a day is of more value to a pianist technically and musically than an army of mechanical devices.

"I never see a latter-day pianist on his travels but I am reminded of a comedian with his rouge-pot, grease-paints, wigs, arms, and costumes. Without them, what is the actor? Without his finger-boards and exercising machines, what is the pianist of today? He fears to stop a moment

because his rival across the street will be able to play the double-thirds study of Chopin in quicker *tempo*. It all hinges on velocity. This season there will be a race between Rosenthal and Sauer, to see who can vomit the greater number of notes. Pleasing, laudable ambition, is it not? In my time a piano artist read, meditated, communed much with nature, slept well, ate and drank well, saw much of society, and all his life was reflected in his play. There was sensibility —above all, sensibility—the one quality absent from the performances of your new pianists. I don't mean super-sickly emotion, nor yet sprawling passion—the passion that tears the wires to tatters, but a poetic sensibility that infused every bar with humanity. To this was added a healthy tone that lifted the music far above anything morbid or depressing."

I continued in this strain until the dinner-bell rang, and I had to invite my guests to remain. Indeed, I was not sorry, for all old men need some one to talk to and at, else they fret and grow peevish. Besides, I was anxious to put my young masters to the test. I have a grand piano of good age, with a sounding-board like a fine-tempered fiddle. The instrument, an American one, I handle like a delicate thoroughbred horse, and, as my playing is accomplished by the use of

my fingers and not my heels, the piano does not really betray its years.

We dined not sumptuously but liberally, and with our pipes and coffee went to the music room. The lads, excited by my criticisms and good cheer, were eager for a demonstration at the keyboard. So was I. I let them play first. This is what I heard: The dark-skinned youth, who looked like the priestly and uninteresting Siloti, sat down and began idly preluding. He had good fingers, but they were spoiled by a hammer-like touch and the constant use of forearm, upper-arm, and shoulder pressure. He called my attention to his tone. Tone! He made every individual wire jangle, and I trembled for my smooth, well-kept action. Then he began the *B-minor Ballade* of Liszt. Now, this particular piece always exasperates me. If there is much that is mechanical and conventional in the Thalberg fantasies, at least they are frankly sensational and admittedly for display. But the Liszt *Ballade* is so empty, so pretentious, so affected! One expects that something is about to occur, but it never comes. There are the usual chromatic modulations leading nowhere and the usual portentous roll in the bass. The composition works up to as much silly display as ever indulged in by Thalberg. My pianist splashed and spluttered,

played chord-work straight from the shoulder, and when he had finished he cried out, "There is a dramatic close for you!"

"I call it mere brutal noise," I replied, and he winked at his friend, who went to the piano without my invitation. Now, I did not care for the looks of this one, and I wondered if he, too, would display his biceps and his triceps with such force. But he was a different brand of the modern breed. He played with a small, gritty tone, and at a terrible speed, a foolish and fantastic derangement of Chopin's *D-flat Valse*. This he followed, at a break-neck *tempo*, with Brahms' dislocation of Weber's *C major Rondo*, sometimes called "the perpetual movement." It was all very wonderful, but was it music?

"Gentlemen," I said, as I arose, pipe in hand, "you have both studied, and studied hard," and they settled themselves in their bamboo chairs with a look of resignation; "but have you studied well? I think not. I notice that you lay the weight of your work on the side of technics. Speed and a brutal *quasi*-orchestral tone seem to be your goal. Where is the music? Where has the airy, graceful valse of Chopin vanished? Encased, as you gave it, within hard, unyielding walls of double thirds, it lost all its spirit, all its evanescent hues. It is a butterfly caged. And

do you call that music, that topsy-turvying of the Weber *Rondo?* Why, it sounds like a clock that strikes thirteen in the small hours of the night! And you, sir, with your thunderous and grandiloquent Liszt *Ballade*, do you call that pianoforte music, that constant striving for an aping of orchestral effects? Out upon it! It is hollow music—music without a soul. It is easier, much easier, to play than a Mozart sonata, despite all its tumbling about, despite all its notes. You require no touch-discrimination for such a piece. You have none. In your anxiety to compass a big tone you relinquish all attempts at finer shadings—at the *nuance*, in a word. Burly, brutal, and overloaded in your style, you make my poor grand groan without getting one vigorous, vital tone. Why? Because elasticity is absent, and will always be absent, where the fingers are not allowed to make the music. The springiest wrist, the most supple forearm, the lightest upper arm cannot compensate for the absence of an elastic finger-stroke. It is what lightens up and gives variety of color to a performance. You are all after tone-quantity and neglect touch—touch, the revelation of the soul."

"Yes, but your grand is worn out and won't stand any forcing of the tone," answered the Liszt *Ballade*, rather impudently.

"Why the dickens do you want to force the tone?" said I, in tart accents. "It is just there we disagree," I yelled, for I was getting mad. "In your mad quest of tone you destroy the most characteristic quality of the pianoforte—I mean its lack of tone. If it could sustain tone, it would no longer be a pianoforte. It might be an organ or an orchestra, but not a pianoforte. I am after tone-quality, not tonal duration. I want a pure, bright, elastic, spiritual touch, and I let the tonal mass take care of itself. In an orchestra a full chord *fortissimo* is interesting because it may be scored in the most prismatic manner. But hit out on the keyboard a smashing chord and, pray, where is the variety in color? With a good ear you recognize the intervals of pitch, but the color is the same—hard, cold, and monotonous, because you have choked the tone with your idiotic, hammer-like attack. Sonorous, at least, you claim? I defy you to prove it. Where was the sonority in the metallic, crushing blows you dealt in the Liszt *Ballade?* There was, I admit, great clearness—a clearness that became a smudge when you used the damper pedal. No, my boys, you are on the wrong track with your orchestral-tone theory. You transform the instrument into something that is neither an orchestra nor a pianoforte. Stick to the old way;

it's the best. Use plenty of finger pressure, elastic pressure, play Bach, throw dumb devices to the dogs, and, if you use the arm pressure at all, confine it to the forearm. That will more than suffice for the shallow dip of the keys. You can't get over the fact that the dip is shallow, so why attempt the impossible? For the amount of your muscle expenditure you would need a key dip of about six inches. Now, watch me. I shall, without your permission, and probably to your disgust, play a nocturne by John Field. Perhaps you never heard of him? He was an Irish pianist and, like most Irishmen of brains, gave the world ideas that were promptly claimed by others. But this time it was not an Englishman, but a Pole, who appropriated an Irishman's invention. This nocturne is called a forerunner to the Chopin nocturnes. They are really imitations of Field's, without the blithe, dewy sweetness of the Irishman's. First, let me put out the lamps. There is a moon that is suspended like a silver bowl over the Wissahickon. It is the hour for magic music."

Intoxicated by the sound of my own voice, I began playing the *B-flat Nocturne* of Field. I played it with much delicacy and a delicious touch. I am very vain of my touch. The moon melted into the apartment and my two guests, enthralled

by the mystery of the night and my music, were still as mice. I was enraptured and played to the end. I waited for the inevitable compliment. It came not. Instead, there were stealthy snores. The pair had slept through my playing. Imbeciles! I awoke them and soon packed them off to their canvas home in the woods hard by. They'll get no more dinners or wisdom from me. I tell this tale to show the hopelessness of arguing with this stiff-necked generation of pianists. But I mean to keep on arguing until I die of apoplectic rage. Good-evening!

XVI

TCHAIKOVSKY

A DAY in musical New York!

Not a bad idea, was it? I hated to leave the country, with its rich after-glow of Summer, its color-haunted dells, and its pure, searching October air, but a paragraph in a New York daily, which I read quite by accident, decided me, and I dug out some good clothes from their fastness and spent an hour before my mirror debating whether I should wear the coat with the C-sharp minor colored collar or the one with the velvet cuffs in the sensuous key of E-flat minor. Being an admirer of Kapellmeister Kreisler (there's a writer for you, that crazy Hoffmann!), I selected the former. I went over on the 7.30 A. M., P. R. R., and reached New York in exactly two hours. There's a *tempo* for you! I mooned around looking for old landmarks that had vanished—twenty years since I saw Gotham, and then Theodore Thomas was king.

I felt quite miserable and solitary, and, being hungry, went to a much-talked-of café, Lüchow's by name, on East Fourteenth Street. I saw Steinway and Sons across the street and re-

flected with sadness that the glorious days of Anton Rubinstein were over, and I still a useless encumberer of the earth. Then an arm was familiarly passed through mine and I was saluted by name.

"You! why I thought you had passed away to the majority where Dussek reigns in ivory splendor."

I turned and discovered my young friend—I knew his grandfather years ago—Sledge, a pianist, a bad pianist, and an alleged critic of music. He calls himself "a music critic." Pshaw! I was not wonderfully warm in my greeting, and the lad noticed it.

"Never mind my fun, Mr. Fogy. Grandpa and you playing Moscheles' *Hommage à Fromage*, or something like that, is my earliest and most revered memory. How are you? What can I do for you? Over for a day's music? Well, I represent the *Weekly Whiplash* and can get you tickets for anything from hell to Hoboken."

Now, if there is anything I dislike, it is flippancy or profanity, and this young man had both to a major degree. Besides, I loathe the modern musical journalist, flying his flag one week for one piano house and scarifying it the next in choice Billingsgate.

"Oh, come into Lüchow's and eat some beer,"

impatiently interrupted my companion, and, like the good-natured old man that I am, I was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And how I regretted it afterward! I am cynical enough, forsooth, but what I heard that afternoon surpassed my comprehension. I knew that artistic matters were at a low ebb in New York, yet I never realized the lowness thereof until then. I was introduced to a half-dozen smartly dressed men, some beardless, some middle-aged, and all dissipated looking. They regarded me with curiosity, and I could hear them whispering about my clothes. I got off a few feeble jokes on the subject, pointing to my C-sharp minor colored collar. A yawn traversed the table.

"Ah, who has the courage to read Hoffmann, nowadays?" asked a boyish-looking rake. I confessed that I had. He eyed me with an amused smile that caused me to fire up. I opened on him. He ordered a round of drinks. I told him that the curse of the generation was its cold-blooded indifference, its lack of artistic conscience. The latter word caused a sleepy, fat man with spectacles to wake up.

"Conscience, who said conscience? Is there such a thing in art any more?" I was delighted for the backing of a stranger, but he calmly ignored me and continued:

"Newspapers rule the musical world, and woe betide the artist who does not submit to his masters. Conscience, pooh-pooh! Boodle, lots of it, makes most artistic reputations. A pianist is boomed a year ahead, like Paderewski, for instance. Paragraphs subtly hinting of his enormous success, or his enormous hair, or his enormous fingers, or his enormous technic——"

"Give us a *fermata* on your enormous story, Jenkins. Every one knows you are disgruntled because the *Whiplash* attacks your judgment." This from another journalist.

Jenkins looked sourly at my friend Sledge, but that shy young person behaved most nonchalantly. He whistled and offered Jenkins a cigar. It was accepted. I was disgusted, and then they all fell to quarreling over Tchaikovsky. I listened with amazement.

"Tchaikovsky," I heard, "Tchaikovsky is the last word in music. His symphonies, his symphonic poems, are a superb condensation of all that Beethoven knew and Wagner felt. He has ten times more technic for the orchestra than Berlioz or Wagner, and it is a pity he was a suicide—" "How," I cried, "Tchaikovsky a sucide?" They didn't even answer me.

"He might have outlived the last movement of that B-minor symphony, the suicide symphony,

and if he had we would have had another ninth symphony." I arose indignant at such blasphemy, but was pushed back in my seat by Sledge. "What a pity Beethoven did not live to hear a man who carried to its utmost the expression of the emotions!" I now snorted with rage, Sledge could no longer control me.

"Yes, gentlemen," I shouted; "utmost expression of the emotions, but what sort of emotions? What sort, I repeat, of shameful, morbid emotions?" The table was quiet again; a single word had caught it. "Oh, Mr. Fogy, you are not so very Wissahickon after all, are you? You know the inside story, then?" cried Sledge. But I would not be interrupted. I stormed on.

"I know nothing about any story and don't care to know it. I come of a generation of musicians that concerned itself little with the scandals and private life of composers, but lots with their music and its meanings." "Go it, Fogy," called out Sledge, hammering the table with his seidl. "I believe that some composers should be put in jail for the villainies they smuggle into their score. This Tchaikovsky of yours—this Russian—was a wretch. He turned the prettiness and favor and noble tragedy of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* into a bawd's tale; a tale of brutal, vile lust; for such passion

as he depicts is not love. He took *Hamlet* and transformed him from a melancholy, a philosophizing Dane into a yelling man, a man of the steppes, soaked with *vodka* and red-handed with butchery. Hamlet, forsooth! Those twelve strokes of the bell are the veriest melodrama. And *Francesca da Rimini*—who has not read of the gentle, lovelorn pair in Dante's priceless poem; and how they read no more from the pages of their book, their very glances glued with love? What doth your Tchaikovsky with this Old World tale? Alas! you know full well. He tears it limb from limb. He makes over the lovers into two monstrous Cossacks, who gibber and squeak at each other while reading some obscene volume. Why, they are too much interested in the pictures to think of love. Then their dead carcasses are whirled aloft on screaming flames of hell, and sent whizzing into a spiral eternity."

"Bravo! bravo! great! I tell you he's great, your friend. Keep it up old man. Your description beats Dante and Tchaikovsky combined!" I was not to be lured from my theme, and, stopping only to take breath and a fresh dip of my beak into the Pilsner, I went on:

"His *Manfred* is a libel on Byron, who was a libel on God." "Byron, too," murmured Jen-

kins. "Yes, Byron, another blasphemer. The six symphonies are caricatures of the symphonic form. Their themes are, for the most part, unfitted for treatment, and in each and every one the boor and the devil break out and dance with uncouth, lascivious gestures. This musical drunkenness; this eternal license; this want of repose, refinement, musical feeling—all these we are to believe make great music. I'll not admit it, gentlemen; I'll not admit it! The piano concerto—I only know one—with its fragmentary tunes; its dislocated, jaw-breaking rhythms, is ugly music; plain, ugly music. It is as if the composer were endeavoring to set to melody the consonants of his name. There's a name for you, Tchaikovsky! 'Shriekhoarsely' is more like it." There was more banging of steins, and I really thought Jenkins would go off in an apoplectic fit, he was laughing so.

"The songs are barbarous, the piano-solo pieces a muddle of confused difficulties and childish melodies. You call it naïveté. I call it puerility. I never saw a man that was less capable of developing a theme than Tchaikovsky. Compare him to Rubinstein and you insult that great master. Yet Rubinstein is neglected for the new man simply because, with your depraved taste, you must have lots of red pepper,

high spices, rum, and an orchestral color that fairly blisters the eye. You call it color. I call it chromatic madness. Just watch this agile fellow. He lays hold on a subject, some Russian *volks* melody. He gums it and bolts it before it is half chewed. He has not the logical charm of Beethoven—ah, what Jovian repose; what keen analysis! He has not the logic, minus the charm, of Brahms; he never smells of the pure, open air, like Dvořák—a milkman's composer; nor is Tchaikovsky master of the pictorial counterpoint of Wagner. All is froth and fury, oaths, grimaces, yelling, hallooing like drunken Kalmucks, and when he writes a slow movement it is with a pen dipped in molasses. I don't wish to be unjust to your 'modern music lord,' as some affected idiot calls him, but really, to make a god of a man who has not mastered his material and has nothing to offer his hearers but blasphemy, vulgarity, brutality, evil passions like hatred, concupiscence, horrid pride—indeed, all the seven deadly sins are mirrored in his scores—is too much for my nerves. Is this your god of modern music? If so, give me Wagner in preference. Wagner, thank the fates, is no hypocrite. He says out what he means, and he usually means something nasty. Tchaikovsky, on the contrary, taking advantage of the peculiar

medium in which he works, tells the most awful, the most sickening, the most immoral stories; and if he had printed them in type he would have been knouted and exiled to Siberia. If——"

"Time to close up," said the waiter. I was alone. The others had fled. I had been mumbling with closed eyes for hours. Wait until I catch that Sledge!

XVII

MUSICAL BIOGRAPHY MADE TO ORDER

NO longer from Dussek-Villa-on-Wissahickon do I indite my profound thoughts (it is the fashion nowadays in Germany for a writer to proclaim himself or herself—there are a great many "hers"—profound; the result, I suppose, of too much Nietzsche and too little common sense, not to mention modesty—that quite antiquated virtue). I am now situated in this lovely, umbrageous spot not far from the Bohemian border in Germany, on the banks of the romantic river Pilsen. To be sure, there are no catfish and waffles *à la* Schuylkill, but are there any to be found today at Wissahickon? On the other hand, there is good cooking, excellent beer and in all Schaumpfeffer, a town of nearly 3000 souls, you won't find a man or woman who has heard of any composer later than Haydn. They still dance to the music of Lanner and the elder Strauss; Johann, Jr., is considered rather an iconoclast in his *Fledermaus*. I carefully conceal the American papers, which are smuggled out to my villa—Villa Scherzo it is called because life is such a joke, especially music—and I read

them and all modern books (that is, those dating later than 1850) behind closed doors. Oh, I am so cheerful over this heavenly relief from thrice-accursed "modernity." I'm old, I admit (I still recall Kalkbrenner's pearly touch and Doehler's chalky tone), but my hat is still on the piano top. In a word, I'm in the ring and don't propose to stop writing till I die, and I shan't die as long as I can hold a pen and protest against the tendencies of the times. Old Fogy to the end!

I walk, I talk, I play Hummel, Bach, Mozart, and occasionally Stephen Heller—he's a good substitute for the sickly, affected Chopin. I read, read too much. Lately, I've been browsing in my musical library, a large one as you well know, for I have been adding to it for the last two decades and more by receiving the newest contributions to what is called "musical literature." Well, I don't mind telling you that the majority of books on music bore me to death. Particularly books containing apochryphal stories of the lives of great composers or executive musicians. Pshaw! Why I can reel off yarns by the dozen if I'm put to it. Besides, the more one reads of the private lives of great musicians, the more one's ideal of the fitness of things is shocked. Paderewski putting a

collar button in his shirt and swearing at his private chaplain because some of the criticisms were underdone, is not half so fearsome as Chopin with the boils, or Franz Schubert advertising in a musical journal. After years of reading I have reached the conclusion that the average musical Boswell is a fraud, a snare, a pitfall, and a delusion. The way to go about being one is simple. First acquaint yourself with a few facts in the lives of great musicians, then, on a slim framework, plaster with fiction till the structure fairly trembles. Never fear. The publishers will print it, the public will devour it, especially if it be anecdotage. Let me reveal the working of the musical fiction mill. Here, for example, is something in the historical vein. Of necessity it must be pointless and colorless; that lends the touch of reality. Let us call it—"Bach and the Boehm Flute."

Once upon a time it is related that the great Johann Sebastian Bach visited Frederick the Great at Potsdam. Stained with travel the wonderful fugue-founder was ushered into the presence of Voltaire. "Gentlemen," cried that monarch to his courtiers, "Old Bach has arrived; let us see what this jay looks like." Frederick was always fond of a joke at the expense of the Boetians. Attired as he was, Bach was ushered

into the presence of his majesty. In his hand he held a small box—or, if you prefer it stated symbolically, a small bachs. "Ah! Master Bach," said the Prussian King, condescendingly, "What have you in your hand?" "A Boehm flute, your majesty," answered Bach; "for it I have composed a concerto in seven flats." "You lie!" retorted the bluff monarch, "the Boehm flute has not yet been invented. Away with you, hayseed from Halle." Whereat the mighty Bach softly laughed, being tickled by the regal repartee, and stole home, and there he sat him down and composed a nine-part fugue for Boehm flute and jackpot on the word Potsdam, the manuscript of which is still extant.

How's that? Or, suppose Beethoven's name be mentioned. Here is a specimen brick from the sort of material Beethoven anecdotes are made. Call it, for the sake of piquancy, "Beethoven and Esterhazy."

"No," yelled the composer of the *Ninth Symphony*, throwing a bootjack at his housekeeper—thus far the eleventh, I mean housekeeper and not bootjack—"No, tell the thundering idiot I'm drunk, or dead, or both." Then, with a sigh, he took up a quart bottle of Schnapps and poured the contents over his hair, and with beating heart penned his immortal *Hymn to Joy*.

Prince Esterhazy, his patron, greatly incensed at the refusal of Beethoven to admit him, hastily chalked on his door a small offensive musical theme, which the great composer later utilized in the allegro of his *Razzlewiski quartet* (C sharp minor). From such small beginnings, etc.

You will observe how I work in Beethoven's frenetic rage, his rudeness, absent-mindedness, and all the rest of the things we are taught to believe that Beethoven indulged in. Now for something more modern and in a lighter vein. This is for the Brahms lover. Let us call it "Brahms' hatred of Cats."

Brahms, so it is said, was an avowed enemy of the feline tribe. Unlike Scarlatti, who was passionately fond of chords of the diminished cats, the phlegmatic Johannes spent much of his time at his window, particularly of moonlit nights, practising counterpoint on the race of cats, the kind that infest back yards of dear old Vienna. Dr. Antonin Dvořák had made his beloved friend and master a present of a peculiar bow and arrow, which is used in Bohemia to slay sparrows. In and about Prague it is named in the native tongue, "Slugj hym inye nech." With this formidable weapon did the composer of orchestral cathedrals spend his leisure moments. Little wonder that Wagner became an anti-

vivisectionist, for he, too, had been up in Brahms' backyard, but being near-sighted, usually missed his cat. Because of arduous practice Brahms always contrived to bring down his prey, and then —O diabolical device!—after spearing the poor brutes, he reeled them into his room after the manner of a trout fisher. Then—so Wagner averred—he eagerly listened to the expiring groans of his victims and carefully jotted down in his note-book their antemortem remarks. Wagner declared that he worked up these piteous utterances into his chamber-music, but then Wagner had never liked Brahms. Some latter-day Nottebohm may arise and exhibit to an outraged generation the musical sketch-books of Brahms, so that we may judge of the truth of this tale.

For a change, drop the severe objectivity of the method historical and attempt the personal. It is very fetching. Here's a title for you: "How I met Richard Wagner."

The day was of the soft dreamy May sort. I was walking slowly across the Austernheim-hellmsberger Platz—local color, you observe!—when my eyes suddenly collided with a queer apparition. At first blush it looked like a little old woman, in visage a veritable witch; but horrors! a witch with whiskers. This old

woman, as I mistook her to be, was attired in an Empire gown, with crinoline under-attachments. Around the neck was an Elizabethan ruff, and on the head was a bonnet of the vogue of 1840; huge, monstrously trimmed and bedecked with a perfect garden of artificial flowers. The color of the dress was salmon-blue, with pink ribbons. Altogether it was a fearful get-up, and, involuntarily, I looked about me expecting to see people stopping, a crowd forming. But no one appeared to notice the little old woman except myself, and as she drew near I discovered that she wore spectacles and a fringe of iron-gray hair around her face. Her eyes were piercingly bright and on her lips was etched a sardonic smile. Not quite knowing how to explain my rude stare, I was preparing to turn in another direction, when the stranger accosted me, and in the voice of a man: "Perhaps you don't know that I am Richard Wagner, the composer of the *Ring?* I am also Liszt's son-in-law, and from the way you turn your feet in, I take you to be a pianist and a Leschetizky pupil!" Marvelous psychologist! A regular Sherlock Holmes. And then, with a snort of rage, the Master walked away, a massive Dachshund viciously snapping at a link of sausage that idly swung from his pocket.

There, you have the Wagner anecdote orchestrated to suit those musical persons who believe that the composer was fond of nothing but millinery and dogs. Finally, if your publisher clamors for something about Liszt or Chopin, you may quote this; not forgetting the allusion to George Sand. To mention Chopin without Sand would be considered excessively inaccurate. I call the story, "Liszt's Clever Retort."

It was midwinter. As was his wont in this season, Chopin was attired from head to foot in white wool. His fragile form and spiritual face, with its delicate smile, made him seem a member of some heavenly brotherhood that spends its existence praying for the expiation of the wickedness wrought by men. The composer was standing near the fireplace; without it snowed, desperately snowed. He was not alone. Half sitting, half reclining on a chair, his feet on the mantelpiece, was a man, spare and sinewy as an Indian. Long, coarse, brown hair hung mane-like upon his shoulders. His lithe, powerful fingers almost seemed to crush the short white Irish clay pipe from which he occasionally took a whiff. It was Liszt, Franz Liszt, Liszt Ferencz—don't forget the accompanying *Eljen!*—the pet of the gods, the adored of

women; Liszt who never had a hair-cut; Liszt the inventor of the Liszt pupil. There had evidently been a heated discussion, for Chopin's face was adorned with bright hectic spots, his smile was sardonic, and a cough shook his ascetic frame as if from suppressed chagrin. Liszt was surly and at intervals said "basta!" beneath his long Milesian upper lip. Such silence could not long endure; an explosion was imminent. Liszt, quickly divining that Chopin was about to break forth in an hysterical fury, forstalled him by jocosely crying: "Freddy, my old son, the trouble with you is that you have no Sand in you!" And before the enraged Pole could answer this cruel, mocking raillery, the tall Magyar leaned over, pressed the button three times, and the lemonade came in time to avert bloodshed.

There, Mr. Editor, you have a pleasing comminglement of romance and colloquialism. Now that I have shown how to play the trick, let all who will go ahead and be their own musical Boswell.

But a truce to such foolery. I am wayward and gray of thought today. My soul is filled with the clash and dust of life. I hate the eternal blazoning of fierce woes and acid joys upon the orchestral canvas. Why must the music of a

composer be played? Why must our tone-weary world be sorely grieved by the subjective shrieks and imprudent publications of some musical fellow wrestling in mortal agony with his first love, his first tailor's bill, his first acquaintance with the life about him? Why, I ask, should music leave the page on which it is indited? Why need it be played? How many beauties in a score are lost by translation into rude tones! How disenchanting sound those climbing, arbutus-like arpeggios and subtle half-tints of Chopin when played on that brutal, jangling instrument of wood, wire and iron, the pianoforte! I shudder at the profanation. I feel an oriental jealousy concerning all those beautiful thoughts nestling in the scores of Chopin and Schubert which are laid bare and dissected by the pompous pen of the music-critic. The man who knows it all. The man who seeks to transmute the unutterable and ineffable delicacies of tone into terms of commercial prose. And newspaper prose. Hideous jargon, I abominate you!

I am suffering from too many harmonic harangues. [Isn't this one?] I long for the valley of silence, Edgar Poe's valley, wherein not even a sigh stirred the amber-colored air [or wasn't it saffron-hued? I forget, and Poe is not to be had in this corner of the universe]. Why can't

music be read in the seclusion of one's study, in the company of one's heart-beats? Why must we go to the housetop and shout our woes to the universe? The "barbaric yawp" of Walt Whitman, over the roofs of the world, has become fashionable, and from tooting motor-cars to noisy symphonies all is a conspiracy against silence. At night dream-fugues shatter the walls of our inner consciousness, and yet we call music a divine art! I love the written notes, the symbols of the musical idea. Music, like some verse, sounds sweeter on paper, sweeter to the inner ear. Music overheard, not heard, is the more beautiful. Palimpsestlike we strive to decipher and unweave the spiral harmonies of Chopin, but they elude as does the sound of falling waters in a dream. Those violet bubbles of prismatic light that the Sarmatian composer blows for us are too fragile, too intangible, too spirit-haunted to be played. [All this sounds as if I were really trying to write after the manner of the busy Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, who helped Liszt to manufacture his book on Chopin; indeed, it is suspected, altered every line he wrote of it.]

O, for some mighty genius of color who will deluge the sky with pyrotechnical symphonies! Color that will soothe the soul with iridescent and

incandescent harmonies, that the harsh, brittle noises made by musical instruments will no longer startle our weaving fancies. Yet if Shelley had not sung or Chopin chanted, how much poorer would be the world today. But that is no reason why school children should scream in chorus: "Life, like a dome of many-colored glass, stains the white radiance of eternity," or that tepid misses in their 'teens should murder the nocturnes of Chopin. Even the somnolent gurgle of the bullfrog, around the ponds of Manayunk, as he signals to his mate in the mud, is often preferable to music made by earthly hands. Let it be abolished. Electrocute the composer and banish the music-critic. Then let there be elected a supervisory board of trusty guardians, men absolutely above the reproach of having played the concertina or plunked staccato tunes on a banjo. Entrust to their care all beautiful music and poetry and prohibit the profane, vulgar, the curious, gaping herd from even so much as a glance at these treasures. For the few, the previous elect, the quintessential in art, let no music be sounded throughout the land. Let us read it and think tender and warlike silent thoughts.

And now, having too long detained you with my vagaries, let me say "good night," for it is getting

dark, and before midnight I must patrol the keyboard for at least four hours, unthreading the digital intricacies of Kalkbrenner's Variations on the old melody, *Sei ruhig mein Herz, or the Cat will hear you.*

XVIII

OLD FOGY WRITES A SYMPHONIC POEM

"DEFINITE feelings and emotions are unsusceptible of being embodied in music," says Eduard Hanslick in his *Beautiful in Music.* Now, you composers who make symphonic poems, why don't you realize that on its merits as a musical composition, its theme, its form, its treatment, that your work will endure, and not on account of its fidelity to your explanatory program?

For example, if I were a very talented young composer—which I am not—and had mastered the tools of my trade—knew everything from a song to a symphony, and my instrumentation covered the whole gamut of the orchestral pigment. . . . Well, one night as I tossed wearily on my bed—it was a fine night in spring, the moon rounded and lustrous and silvering the lake below my window—suddenly my musical imagination began to work.

I had just been reading, and for the thousandth time, Browning's *Childe Roland*, with its sinister coloring and spiritual suggestions. Yet it had never before struck me as a subject suitable for musical treatment. But the exquisite cool of

the night, its haunting mellow flavor, had set my brain in a ferment. A huge fantastic shadow threw a jagged black figure on the lake. Presto, it was done, and with a mental snap that almost blinded me.

I had my theme. It will be the first theme in my new symphonic poem, *Childe Roland*. It will be in the key of B minor, which is to be emblematic of the dauntless knight who to "the dark tower came," unfettered by obstacles, physical or spiritual.

O, how my brain seethed and boiled, for I am one of those unhappy men who the moment they get an idea must work it out to its bitter end. *Childe Roland* kept me awake all night. I even heard his "dauntless horn" call and saw the "squat tower." I had his theme. I felt it to be good; to me it was Browning's Knight personified. I could hear its underlying harmonies and the instrumentation, sombre, gloomy, without one note of gladness.

The theme I treated in such a rhythmical fashion as to impart to it exceeding vitality, and I announced it with the English horn, with a curious rhythmic background by the tympani; the strings in division played tremolando and the bass staccato and muted. This may not be clear to you; it is not very clear to me, but at the time

it all seemed very wonderful. I finished the work after nine months of agony, of revision, of pruning, clipping, cutting, hawking it about for my friends' inspection and getting laughed at, admired and also mildly criticized.

The thrice fatal day arrived, the rehearsals had been torture, and one night the audience at a great concert had the pleasure of reading on the program Browning's *Childe Roland* in full, and wondering what it was all about. My symphonic poem would tell them all, as I firmly believed in the power of music to portray definitely certain soul-states, to mirror moods, to depict, rather indefinitely to be sure, certain phenomena of daily life.

My poem was well played. It was only ninety minutes long, and I sat in a nervous swoon as I listened to the *Childe Roland* theme, the squat tower theme, the sudden little river motif, the queer gaunt horse theme, the horrid engine of war motif, the sinister, grinning, false guide subject—in short, to all the many motives of the poem, with its apotheosis, the dauntless blast from the brave knight as he at last faced the dark tower.

This latter I gave out with twelve trombones, twenty-one bassett horns and one calliope; it almost literally brought down the house, and I

was the happiest man alive. As I moved out I was met by the critic of *The Disciples of Tone,* who said to me:

"Lieber Kerl, I must congratulate you; it beats Richard Strauss all hollow. Who and what was *Childe Roland?* Was he any relation to Byron's *Childe Harold?* I suppose the first theme represented the 'galumphing' of his horse, and that funny triangular fugue meant that the horse was lame in one leg and was going it on three. Adieu; I'm in a hurry."

Triangular fugue! Why, that was the cross-roads before which Childe Roland hesitated! How I hated the man.

I was indeed disheartened. Then a lady spoke to me, a musical lady, and said:

"It was grand, perfectly grand, but why did you introduce a funeral march in the middle—I fancied that Childe Roland was not killed until the end?"

The funeral march she alluded to was not a march at all, but the "quagmire theme," from which queer faces threateningly mock at the knight.

"Hopeless," thought I; "these people have no imagination."

The next day the critics treated me roughly. I was accused of cribbing my first theme from

The Flying Dutchman, and fixing it up rhythmically for my own use, as if I hadn't made it on the spur of an inspired moment! They also told me that I couldn't write a fugue; that my orchestration was overloaded, and my work deficient in symmetry, repose, development and, above all, in coherence.

This last was too much. Why, Browning's poem was contained in my tone-poem; blame Browning for the incoherence, for I but followed his verse. One day many months afterward I happened to pick up Hanslick, and chanced on the following:

"Let them play the theme of a symphony by Mozart or Haydn, an adagio by Beethoven, a scherzo by Mendelssohn, one of Schumann's or Chopin's compositions for the piano, or again, the most popular themes from the overtures of Auber, Donizetti or Flotow, who would be bold enough to point out a definite feeling on the subject of any of these themes? One will say 'love.' Perhaps so. Another thinks it is longing. He may be right. A third feels it to be religion. Who may contradict him? Now, how can we talk of a definite feeling represented when nobody really knows what is represented? Probably all will agree about the beauty or beauties of the composition, whereas all will differ regard-

ing its subject. To represent something is to exhibit it clearly, to set it before us distinctly. But how can we call that the subject represented by an art which is really its vaguest and most indefinite element, and which must, therefore, forever remain highly debatable ground."

I saw instantly that I had been on a false track. Charles Lamb and Eduard Hanslick had both reached the same conclusion by diverse roads. I was disgusted with myself. So then the whispering of love and the clamor of ardent combatants were only whispering, storming, roaring, but not the whispering of love and the clamor; musical clamor, certainly, but not that of "ardent combatants."

I saw then that my symphonic poem, *Childe Roland*, told nothing to anyone of Browning's poem, that my own subjective and overstocked imaginings were not worth a rush, that the music had an objective existence as music and not as a poetical picture, and by the former and not the latter it must be judged. Then I discovered what poor stuff I had produced—how my fancy had tricked me into believing that those three or four bold and heavily orchestrated themes, with their restless migration into different tonalities, were "soul and tales marvelously mirrored."

In reality my ignorance and lack of contra-

puntal knowledge, and, above all, the want of clear ideas of form, made me label the work a symphonic poem—an elastic, high-sounding, pompous and empty title. In a spirit of revenge I took the score, rearranged it for small orchestra, and it is being played at the big circus under the euphonious title of *The Patrol of the Night Stick,* and the musical press praises particularly the graphic power of the night stick motive and the verisimilitude of the escape of the burglar in the coda.

Alas, *Childe Roland!*

Seriously, if our rising young composers—isn't it funny they are always spoken of as rising? I suppose it's because they retire so late—read Hanslick carefully, much good would accrue. It is all well enough to call your work something or other, but do not expect me nor my neighbor to catch your idea. We may be both thinking about something else, according to our temperaments. I may be probably enjoying the form, the instrumentation, the development of your themes; my neighbor, for all we know, will in imagination have buried his rich, irritable old aunt, and so your pæan of gladness, with its brazen clamor of trumpets, means for him the triumphant ride home from the cemetery and the anticipated joys of the post-mortuary hurrah.

XIX

A COLLEGE FOR CRITICS

YES, it was indeed a hot, sultry afternoon, and as the class settled down to stolid work, even Mr. Quelson shifted impatiently at the blackboard, where he was trying to explain to a young pupil from Missouri that Beethoven did not write his oratorio, *The Mount of Olives,* for Park and Tilford. It was no use, however, the pupil had been brought up in a delicatessen foundry and saw everything musical from the comestible viewpoint.

The sun blazed through the open oriel windows at the western end of the large hall, and the class inwardly rebelled at its task and thought of cool, green grottoes with heated men frantically falling over the home-plate, while the multitude belched bravos as Teddy McCorkle made three bases. Instead of the national game the class was wrestling with figured bass and the art of descant, and again it groaned aloud.

Mr. Quelson faced his pupils. In his eyes were tears, but he must do his duty.

"Gentlemen," he suavely said, "the weather is certainly trying, but remember this is examination day, and next week you, that is some

of you, will go out into the great world to face its cares, to wrestle for its prizes, to put forth your strength against the strength of men; in a word, to become critics of music, and to represent this college, wherein you have imbibed so much generous and valuable learning."

He paused, and the class, which had pricked up its ears at the word "imbibe," settled once again to listen in gloomy silence. Their dignified preceptor continued.

"And now, gentlemen of the Brahms Institute, I hasten to inform you that the examining committee is without, and is presently to be admitted. Let me conjure you to keep your heads; let me beg of you to do yourself justice. Surely, after five years of constant, sincere, and earnest study you will not backslide, you will not, in the language of the great Matthewson, make any muffs." Professor Quelson looked about him and beamed benignly. He had made a delicate joke, and it was not lost, for most sonorously the class chanted, "He's a jolly good fellow," and in modern harmonies. Their professor looked gratified and bowed. Then he tapped a bell, which sounded the triad of B flat minor, and the doors at the eastern end of the hall parted asunder, and the examining committee solemnly entered.

It was an august looking gang. Two music-critics from four of the largest cities of the country comprised the board of examination, with a president selected by common vote. This president was the distinguished pianist and literator, Dr. Larry Nopkin, and his sarcastic glare at the pupils gave every man the nervous shivers. Funereally the nine men filed by and took their seats on the platform, Dr. Nopkin occupying with Mr. Quelson the dais, on which stood a grand piano.

There was a brief pause, but pregnant with anxiety. Mr. Quelson, all smiles, handed Dr. Nopkin a long list of names, and the committee fanned itself and thought of the *Tannhäuser-Busch Overture* which it had listened to so attentively in the Wagner coaches that brought it to Brahms Institute.

The only man of the party who seemed out of humor was Mr. Blink, who grumbled to his neighbor that the name of the college was in bad taste. It should have been called the Chopin Retreat or the Paderewski Home, but Brahms—pooh!

Dr. Nopkin arose, put on a pair of ponderous spectacles, and grinned malevolently at his hearers.

"Young men," he squeakily said, "I want to

begin with a story. Once upon a time a certain young man, full of the conviction that he was a second Liszt, sought out Thalberg, when that great pianist—"

"Great pianist!" whispered Blink, sardonically.

"Yes, I said great pianist—greater than all your Paderewski's, your—"

"I protest, Mr. President," said Mr. Blink, rising to his feet; at the same time a pink flush rose to his cheek. "I protest. We have not come here to compare notes about pianists, but to examine this class."

The class giggled, but respectfully and in a perfect major-accord. Dr. Nopkin grew black in the face. Turning to Mr. Quelson he said:

"Either I am president or I am not, Mr. Quelson."

That gentleman looked very much embarrassed.

"Oh, of course, doctor, of course; Mr. Blink was carried away, you know—carried away by his professional enthusiasm—no offense intended, I am sure, Mr. Blink."

By this time Mr. Blink had been pulled down in his seat by Mr. Sanderson, the critic of the *Skyrocket,* and order was restored.

The class seemed disappointed as Dr. Nopkin proceeded: "As I was saying when interrupted

by my Wagnerian associate, the young man went to Thalberg and played an original composition called the *Tornado Galop*. It was written exclusively for the black keys, and a magnificent *glissando*, if I do flatter myself, ended the piece most brilliantly. Thalberg—it was in the year '57, if I remember aright."

"You do," remarked the class in pleasing tune.

"Thank you, gentlemen, I see dates are not your weak point. Thalberg remarked—"

"For goodness sake give us a rest on Thalberg!" said the irrepressible Blink.

"A rest, yes, a *fermata* if you wish," retorted the doctor, and the witticism was received with a yell, in the Doric mode. You see Rheinberger had not quite sapped the sense of humor of Mr. Quelson's young acolytes.

Considerably pleased with himself Dr. Nopkin continued:

"Thalberg said to the young man, 'Honored sir, there is too much wind in your work, give your Tornado more earth, and less air.' Now the point of this amiable criticism is applicable to your work now and in the future. Give your readers little wind, but much soil. Do not indulge in fine writing, but facts, facts, facts!" Here the speaker paused and glanced severely at his colleagues, who awoke with a start. The

ear of the music critic is very keen and long practice enables him to awaken at the precise moment the music ceases.

Then Dr. Nopkin announced that the examinations would begin, and again from a tapped bell sounded the triad of B flat minor. The class looked unhappy, and the young fellow from Missouri burst into tears. For a moment a wave of hysterical emotion surged through the hall, and there being so much temperament present it seemed as if a crisis was at hand. Mr. Quelson rose to the occasion. Crying aloud in a massive voice, he asked:

"Gentlemen, give me the low pitch A!"

Instantly the note was sounded; even the weeping pupil hummed it through his tears, and a panic was averted by the coolness of a massive brain fertile in expedients.

The committee, now thoroughly awake, looked gratified, and the examination began.

After glancing through the list, Dr. Nopkin called aloud:

"Mr. Hogwin, will you please tell me the date of the death of Verdi?"

"Don't let him jolly you, Hoggy, old boy," sang the class in an immaculate minor key. The doctor was aghast, but Mr. Quelson took the part of his school. He argued that the ques-

tion was a misleading one. They wrangled passionately over this, and Blink finally declared that if Verdi was not dead he ought to be. This caused a small riot, which was appeased by the class singing the *Anvil Chorus*.

"Well, I give in, Mr. Quelson; perhaps my friend Blink would like to put a few questions." Dr. Nopkin fanned himself vigorously with an old and treasured copy of Dwight's *Journal of Music,* containing a criticism of his "passionate octave playing." Mr. Blink arose and took the list.

"I see here," he said, "the name of Beckmesser McGillicuddy. The name is a promising one. Wagner ever desired the Celt to be represented in his scheme of the universe."

"Obliging of him," insinuated Mr. Tile of the *Daily Bulge*.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," groaned poor Quelson; "think of the effect on the class if this spirit of irreverent repartee is maintained."

"Mr. Beckmesser McGillicuddy, will you please stand up?" requested Mr. Blink.

"Stand up, Gilly! Stand up Gilly, and show him what you are. Don't be afraid, Gilly! We will see you through," chanted the class with an amazing volume of tone and in lively rhythm.

The young man arose. He was 6 feet 8, with a 17 waist, and a 12½ neck. Yet he looked intelligent. The class watched him eagerly, and the Missouri member, now thoroughly recovered, whistled the Fate-motif from *Carmen,* and McGillicuddy looked grateful.

"You wish to become a music critic, do you not?" inquired Mr. Blink, patronizingly.

"What do you think I'm here for?" asked the student, in firm, cool tones.

"Tell me, then, did Wagner ever wear paper collars?"

"Celluloid," was the quick answer, and the class cheered. Mr. Quelson looked unhappy, and Tile sneered in a minor but audible key.

"Good," said Mr. Blink. "You'll do. Would any of my colleagues care to question this young and promising applicant, who appears to me to have thoroughly mastered modern music?"

Little Mr. Slehbell arose, and the class again trembled. They had read his *How to See Music Although a Deaf Mute,* and they knew that there were questions in it that could knock them out. The critic secured the list, and after hunting up the letter K, he coughed gently and asked:

"Mr. Krap is here, I hope?"

"Get into line, Billy Krap; get into line,

Billy. Give him as good as he gives you; so fall into line, Billy Krap."

This was first sung by the class with antiphonal responses, then with a fugued finale, and Mr. Slehbell was considerably impressed.

"I must say," he began, "even if you do not become shining lights as music critics, you are certainly qualified to become members of an Opera Company. But where is Mr. Krap—a Bohemian, I should say, from his name."

"Isn't Slehbell marvellous on philology?" said Sanderson, and Dr. Nopkin looked shocked.

No Krap stood up, so the name of Flatbush was called. He, too, was absent, and Mr. Quelson explained in exasperated accents that these two were his prize pupils, but had begged off to umpire a game of Gregorian-chant cricket down in the village. "Ask for Palestrina McVickar," said Mr. Quelson, in an eager stage whisper.

The new man proved to be a wild-looking person, with hair on his shoulders, and it was noticeable that the class gave him no choral invitation to arise. He looked formidable, however, and you could have heard an E string snap, so intense was the silence.

"Mr. McVickar, you are an American, I presume?"

"No, sir; I am an Australian, I am happy to

say." A slight groan was heard from the lips of an austere youth with a Jim Corbett pompadour.

"You may groan all you like," said McVickar, fiercely; "but Fitzsimmons licked him and that blow in the solar plexus—"

Mr. Slehbell raised his hands deprecatingly.

"Really, young gentlemen, you seem very well posted on sporting matters. What I wish to ask you is whether you think Dvořák's later, or American manner, may be compared to Brahms' second or D minor piano concerto period?"

"He doesn't know Brahms from a bull's foot," roared the class, in unison. "Ask him who struck Billy Patterson?" Once more the quick eye of Mr. Quelson saw an impending rebellion, and quickly rushing among the malcontents he bundled five of them out of the room and returned to the platform, murmuring:

"Such musical temperaments, you know; such very great temperaments!" Incidentally, he had rid himself of five of the most ignorant men of the class. Quelson was really very diplomatic.

McVickar hesitated a moment after silence had been restored, and then answered Mr. Slehbell's question:

"You see, sir, we are no further than Leybach and Auber. The name you mention is not familiar to me, but I can tell you all the different

works of Carl Czerny; and I know how to spell Mascagni."

"Heavens," screamed Blink, and he fainted from fright. Beer was ordered, and after a short piano solo—Czerny's *Toccata in C,* from Dr. Larry Nopkin—order reigned once more. The class gazed enviously at the committee as it sipped beer, and longed for the day when it would be free and critics of music. Then Mr. Quelson said that questioning was at an end. He had never endeavored to inculcate knowledge of a positive sort in his pupils. Besides, what did music critics want with knowledge? They had Grove's Dictionary as a starter, and by carefully negativing every date and fact printed in it, they were sure to hit the truth somewhere. A ready pen was the thing, and he begged the committee to be allowed to present specimens of criticisms of imaginary concerts, written by the graduating class of 1912.

The request was granted, and Dr. Nopkin selected as the reader. There was an interval of ten minutes, during which the doctor played snatches of De Koven and Scharwenka, and the class drove its pen furiously. Finally, the bell sounded, and the following criticisms were handed to the president, and read aloud while the class blushed in ruddy ensemble:

An Interesting Evening

"It was a startling sight that met the eyes of the musical editor of the *Evening Buzzard* when he entered the De Pew Opera House last night at 8.22. All the leading families of Mushmelon, arrayed in their best raiment, disported themselves in glittering groups, and it was almost with a feeling of disappointment that we saw the curtain arise on the seventh act of *Faust*. Of course the music and singing were applauded to the echo, and the principals were forced to bow their acknowledgments to the gracious applause of the upper ten of Mushmelon. The following is a list of those present," etc. (Here follow names.)

"A rattling good notice that," said one of the older members of the committee. Mr. Quelson hastened to explain that it was intended for an emergency notice, when the night city editor was unmusical. "But," he added, "here is something in a more superior vein."

Dr. Nopkin read:

How I Heard Paderewski!

"Of course I heard Paderewski. Let me tell you all about it. I had quarreled with my dear one early in the day over a pneumatic tire, so I

determined to forget it and go listen to some music.

"Music always soothes my nerves.

"Does it soothe yours, gentle reader?

"I went to hear Paderewski.

"Taking the Broadway car, me and my liver—my liver is my worst enemy; terrible things, livers; is life really worth the liver?—I sat down and paid my fare to a burly ruffian in a grimy uniform.

"Some day I shall tell you about my adventure with a car. Dear Lord, what an adventure it was!

"Ah, the bitter-sweet days! the long-ago days when we were young and trolleyed.

"But let me tell you how Paderewski played!

"After I reached my seat 4000 women cheered. I was the only man in the house; but being modest, I stood the strain as long as I could, and then—why, Paderewski was bowing, and I forgot all about the women and their enthusiasm at the sight of me.

"Fancy a slender-hipped orchidaceous person, an epicene youth with Botticellian hair and a Nietzsche walk. Fancy ten fluted figures and then—oh, you didn't care what he was playing—indeed, I mislaid my program—and then it was time to go home.

"Some day I shall give you my impressions of the Paderewskian technique, but today is a golden day, the violets are smiling, because God gave them perfume; a lissome lass is in the foreground; why should I bother about piano, Paderewski, or technique?

"Dear Lord, dear Lord—!"

Mr. Quelson looked interrogatively at the committee when the doctor finished.

"The personal note, you know," he said, "the note that is so valued nowadays in criticism."

"Personal rubbish," grunted the doctor, and Mr. Slehbell joyously laughed.

"Give us one with more matter and less manner," remarked Mr. Sanderson, who had quietly but none the less determinedly eaten up all the sandwiches and drunk seven bottles of beer. Mr. Van Oven, of the *Morning Fowl*, was, as usual, fast asleep. [This was the manner in which he composed himself.]

Mr. Quelson handed the doctor the following:

Solid Musical Meat

"The small hall of the Mendelssohn Glee Club was crowded to listen to the polished playing of the Boston Squintet Club last night. It was a graciously inclined audience, and after

Haydn, Grieg, and Brahms had been disclosed, it departed in one of those frames of mind that the chronicler of music events can safely denominate as happy. There were many reasons, which may not be proclaimed now why this should be thus. The first quartet, one of the blithest, airiest, and most serene of Papa Haydn's, was published with absolute finish, if not with abandon. Its naïve measures were never obsessed by the straining after modernity. The Grieg is hardly strict quartet music. It has a savor, a flavor, a perfume, an odor, even a sturdy smell of the Norway pine and fjord; but it is lacking woefully in repose and euphony, and at times it verges perilously on the cacophonous. Mr. Casnoozle and his gifted associates played a marvelous accord and slid over all the yawning tonal precipices, but, heavens, how they did perspire! The Brahms Quartet—"

"I protest," said Mr. Blink, hastily rising. "I've been insulted ever since I entered the building. Why, the very name of the institution is an insult to modern musicians! Brahms! why, good heavens, Brahms is only a white-washed Hummel! And to think of these young minds being poisoned by such antique rot as Brahms' music!"

In a moment the committee was on its legs

howling and jabbering; poor Mr. Quelson vainly endeavoring to keep order. After ten minutes of rowing, during which the class sang *The Night That Larry Was Stretched,* Dr. Nopkin was pushed over the piano and fell on the treble and hurt his lungs. The noise brought to their senses the irate men, and then, to their consternation, they discovered that the class had sneaked off during the racket, and on the blackboard was written: "Oh, we don't know, you're not so critical!"

"My Lord," groaned Mr. Quelson, "they have gone to that infernal Gregorian chant-cricket match; wait till I get hold of that Palestrina McVickar!"

The committee left in a bad humor on the next train, and the principal of Brahms Institute gave his class a vacation. Hereafter he will do his own examining.

XX

A WONDER CHILD

A RECENT event in the musical world of Laputa has been of such extraordinary moment as to warrant me in making some communication of same to your valuable sheet, and although in these days of electricity one might reasonably imagine the cable would have outstripped me, still by careful examination of American newspapers I find only meagre mention of the remarkable musical occurrence that shook all Laputa to its centre last month. As you know, we pride ourselves on being a thoroughly musical nation; our symphony concert programs and our operatic repertory contain all the novelties that are extant. To be sure, we are a little conservative in our tastes and relish Mozart, and, must it be confessed, even Haydn; but, on the other hand, we have a penchant for the Neo-Russian school and hope some day to found a trans-Asiatic band of composers whose names will probably be as hard as their harmonies are to European and American ears.

The event I speak of transcends anything in the prodigy line that we have ever encountered, for while we have been deluged with boy pianists,

infant violinists, and baby singers, *ad nauseam,* still it must be confessed that a centenarian piano virtuoso who would make his début before a curious audience on his hundredth birthday was a novelty indeed, particularly as the aged artist in question had been studying diligently for some ninety-five years under the best masters (and with what opportunities!) and would also on this most auspicious occasion conduct an orchestral composition of his own, a *Marche Funèbre à la Tartare,* for the first time in public. This, then, I repeat, was a prodigy that promised to throw completely in the shade all competitors, in addition to its being an event that had no historical precedence in the annals of music.

With what burning curiosity the night of the concert was awaited I need not describe, nor of the papers teeming with anecdotes of the venerable virtuoso whose name betrayed his Asiatic origin. His great-grandchildren (who were also his managers) announced in their prospectus that their great-grandfather had never played in public before, and with, of course, the exception of his early masters, had never even played for anybody outside of his own family circle. Born in 1788, he first studied technics with the famous Clementi and harmony with Albrechtsberger. His parents early imbued him (by the

aid of a club) with the idea of the extreme importance of time and its value, if rightfully used, in furthering technique. So, from five hours a day in the beginning he actually succeeded in practising eighteen hours out of the twenty-four, which commendable practice (literally) he continued in his later life.

Although he had only studied with one master, the Gospadin Bundelcund, as he was named, had been on intimate terms with all the great virtuosi of his day, and had heard Beethoven, Steibelt, Czerny, Woelfl, Kalkbrenner, Cramer, Hummel, Field, Hiller, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Henselt, and also many minor lights of pianism whose names have almost faded from memory. Always a man of great simplicity and modesty, he retired more and more amidst his studies the older he grew, and even after his marriage he could not be induced to play in public, for his ideal was a lofty one, and though his children, and even his grandchildren, often urged him to make his début, he was inflexible on the subject. His great-grandchildren, howerer, were shrewd, and, taking advantage of the aged pianist's increasing senility, they finally succeeded in making him promise to play at a grand concert, to be given at the capital of Laputa, and, despite his many remonstrances, he at last consented.

It goes without saying that the attendance at our National Opera House was one of the largest ever seen there. The wealth and brains of the capital were present, and all eagerly watched for the novel apparition that was to appear. The program was a simple one: the triple piano concerto of Bach, arranged for one piano by the Gospadin; a movement from the G minor concerto of Dussek; piano solos, *L'Orage*, by Steibelt; a fugue for the left hand alone, by Czerny, and a set of etudes after Czerny, being free transcriptions of his famous *Velocity Studies*, roused the deepest curiosity in our minds, for vague rumors of an astonishing technique were rife. And, finally, when the stage doors were pushed wide open and a covered litter was slowly brought forward by six dusky slaves and gently set down, the pent up feelings of the audience could not be restrained any longer, and a shout that was almost barbaric shook the hall to its centre.

An Echtstein grand piano, with the action purposely lightened to suit the pianist's touch, stood in the centre of the stage, and a large, comfortable looking high-backed chair was placed in front of it. The attendants, after setting the litter down, rolled the chair up to it, and then parting the curtains carefully, and even reverently, lifted out what appeared to be a mass of

black velvet and yellow flax. This bundle they placed on the chair and wheeled it up to the piano and then proceeded to bring forth a quantity of strange looking implements, such as hand guides, gymnasiums, wires and pulleys, and placed them around the odd, lifeless looking mass on the chair. Then a solemn looking individual came forth and announced to the audience that the soloist, owing to his extreme feebleness, had been hypnotized previous to the concert, as it was the only manner in which to get him to play, and that he would be restored to consciousness at once and the program proceeded with.

There was a slight inclination on the part of the audience to hiss, but its extreme curiosity speedily checked it and it breathlessly awaited results. The doctor, for he was one, bent over the recumbent figure of the pianist and, lifting him into an upright position, made a few passes over him and apparently uttered something into his ear through a long tube. A wonderful change at once manifested itself, and slowly raising himself on his feet there stood a gaunt old man, with an enormous skull-like head covered with long yellowish white hair, eyes so sunken as to be invisible, and a nose that would defy all competition as to size.

After fairly tottering from side to side in his

efforts to make a bow, the Gospadin (or, as you would say, Mister or Herr) Bundelcund fell back exhausted in his seat, and while a murmur of pity ran through the house his attendants administered restoratives out of uncanny looking phials and vigorously fanned him. By this time the audience had worked itself up to a fever pitch (at least eight tones above concert pitch) and nothing short of an earthquake would have dispersed it; besides the price of admission was enormous and naturally every one wanted the worth of his money. I had a strong glass and eagerly examined the old man and saw that he had long skinny fingers that resembled claws, a cadaverous face and an air of abstraction one notices in very old or deaf persons. To my horror I noticed that the doctor in addressing him spoke through a large trumpet and then it dawned on me that the man was deaf, and hardly was I convinced of this when my right hand neighbor informed me that the Gospadin was blind also, and being feeble and exhausted by piano practice hardly ever spoke; so he was practically dumb.

Here was an interesting state of things, and my forebodings as to the result were further strengthened when I saw the attendants place the old man's fingers in the technique-developing ma-

chines that encumbered the stage, and vigorously proceeded to exercise his fingers, wrists, and forearms, he all the while feebly nodding, while two other attendants flapped him at intervals with bladders to keep him from going to sleep. Again my right-hand neighbor, who appeared to be loquacious, informed me that the Gospadin's mercenary great-grandchildren kept him awake in this manner and thus forced him to play eighteen hours a day. What a cruelty, I thought, but just then a few muffled chords aroused me from my thoughts and I directed all my attention to the stage, for the performance had at last begun.

Never shall I forget the curious sensation I experienced when the aged prodigy began the performance of the first number, his own remarkable arrangement for piano solo of the Bach concerto in D minor for three pianos, and I instantly discovered that the instrument on which he played had organ pedals attached, otherwise some of the effects he produced could not have been even hinted at. His touch was weird, his technique indescribable, and one no longer listened to the piano, but to one of those instruments of Eastern origin in which glass and metal are extensively used. The quality of tone emanating from the piano was *brittle,* so to

speak; in a word, sounded so thin, sharp, and at times so wavering as to suggest the idea that it might at any moment break. And then it made me indescribably nervous to see his talon-like fingers threading their way through the mazes of the concerto, which was a tax on any player, and though the three piano parts were but faintly reproduced, the arrangement showed ability and musicianship in the handling of it. But a vague, far-away sort of a feeling pervaded the whole performance, which left me at the end rather more dazed than otherwise.

During the uproarious applause that followed my neighbor again remarked to me that though the old man did not appear to be as much exhausted as he had anticipated, still he feared the worst from this great strain of his appearing before such a public and under such exciting circumstances, and then becoming confidential he whispered to me that the agents for the Paul von Janko keyboard had approached the venerable pianist, but after inspecting the invention the latter had replied wearily that he was too old to begin "tobogganing" now. My neighbor seemed to be amused at this joke, and not until the orchestra had begun the tutti of the G minor concerto of Dussek (an intimate friend of the Gospadin's, by the way) did he cease his chuckling.

The concerto was played in a dreary fashion, and only the strenuous efforts of the attendants on each side of the soloist kept him from going off into a sound nap during every tutti. The rest of the piano program was almost the same story. The Steibelt selection, the old-fashioned *L'Orage,* was no storm at all, but a feeble, maundering up and down the keyboard. The Czerny fugue was better and the performance of the same composer's *Velocity Studies* was a marvel of lightness and one might almost say volubility. In these etudes his wonderful stiff arm octave playing, in the real old-fashioned manner, showed itself, for in every run in single notes he introduced octaves. The applause after this was so great and the flappers at the pianist's side plied him so vigorously that the Gospadin actually began playing the *Hexameron,* that remarkably difficult and old set of variations on the march in *Puritani,* by Liszt, Chopin, Pixis, and Thalberg.

These he played, it must be confessed, in a masterly manner, but at the end he introduced a variation, prodigious as to difficulty, which I failed to recognize as ever having seen it in the printed copy of the composition. Again my right-hand neighbor, appearing to anticipate my question on the subject, informed me that it was by Bundelcund himself, and that he had

been angered beyond control by the refusal of the publishers to print it with the rest, and had written a lengthy letter to Liszt on the subject, in which he told him that he considered him a charlatan along with Henselt, Chopin, Hiller, and Thalberg, and that he was the *only* pianist worth speaking of, which information threw an interesting side light on our Asiatic virtuoso's character, and showed that he was made of about the same metal, after all, as most of your European manipulators of ivory.

By this time the stage had been cleared of the piano and the litter, and a conductor's stand was brought forward, draped in black velvet trimmed with white, and appropriately wreathed with tuberoses, whose deathly-sweet odor diffused itself throughout the house and caused an unpleasant shudder to circulate through the audience, who were beginning to realize the mockery of this modern dance of death, but who remained to see the end of the sad comedy. The orchestra, which was reinforced by several uncanny looking instruments, strange even to Asiatic eyes, were seated, and then the dusky servants lifted with infinite care the aged Bundelcund into a standing posture, placed him at the stand, and while four held him there the two flappers were so unremitting in their attentions

that one might suppose the old man's face would be sore, were it not for its almost total absence of flesh, and also his long, thick hair, which fell far below his waist.

Standing in an erect attitude he was an appalling figure to behold, and the two lighted tapers in massive candelabras on each side of the desk lighted up his face with an unholy and gruesome glare. The funereal aspect of the scene was heightened by the house being in total darkness, and though many women had fainted, oppressed by the charnel-house atmosphere that surrounded us, still the audience as a whole remained spellbound in their seats. The medical man now plied the conductor-pianist with the contents of the mysterious phial, and placing a long, white ostrich plume in his hand, he made a signal for the orchestra to begin. The conductor, despite his deafness, appeared to comprehend what was going on and feebly waved the plume in air, and the first gloomy chords of the *Marche Funèbre à la Tartare* were heard. Of all the funeral marches ever penned this composition certainly outdid them all in diabolical wailings and the gnashing of teeth of damned souls.

It was the funeral march of some mid-Asiatic pachyderm, and the whole herd were howling

their grief in a manner which would put Wagner, Berlioz, and Meyerbeer to shame; for such a use of brass had never been even dreamed of, and the peculiar looking instruments I first spoke of now came to the fore and the din they raised was positively hellish. Those who could see the composer's face afterward declared it was wreathed in smiles, but this, of course, I could not see; but I did see, and we all saw, after the rather abrupt end of the march (which finished after a long-drawn-out suspension, *capo d'astro,* resolved by the use of the diseased chord of the minor thirteenth into a dissipated fifth), the venerable virtuoso suddenly collapse, and suddenly fall into the arms of the attendants, whose phlegm, while being thoroughly Oriental, still smacked of anticipation of this very event. Instantly the lights went out and a panic ensued, everyone getting into the street somehow or other. I found myself there side by side with my neighbor, who informed me in an oracular manner that he had expected this all along.

Then an immense crowd, angered by the cruel exhibition which they had witnessed, searched high and low for the miscreant and mercenary great-grandchildren who had so ruthlessly sacrificed their talented progenitor for the sake of pelf, but they were nowhere to be

found, and they doubtlessly had escaped with their booty to a safe place. The doctor had also disappeared and with him all traces of the Gospadin Bundelcund, and soon after sinister rumors were spread that the man we had heard performing was a *dead man* (horrible idea!) that he had been dead for years, but by the aid of that new and yet undeveloped science, hypnotism, he had been revived and made to automatically perform, and that the whole ghastly mummery was planned to make money. Certain it was that we never heard of any of the participants in the affair again, and I write to you knowing that American readers will be interested in this queer musical and psychical prodigy. His epitaph might be given in a slightly altered quotation, "Butchered to make a Laputian's holiday."

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